

Silicon Times Report

"The Original Independent OnLine Magazine"
(Since 1987)

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STReport, with its policy of not accepting any input relative to content from paid advertisers, has over the years developed the reputation of "saying it like it really is". When it comes to our editorials, product evaluations, reviews and over-views, we shall always keep our readers interests first and foremost. With the user in mind, STReport further pledges to maintain the reader confidence that has been developed over the years and to continue "living up to such". All we ask is that our readers make certain the manufacturers, publishers etc., know exactly where the information about their products appeared. In closing, we shall arduously endeavor to meet and further develop the high standards of straight forwardness our readers have come to expect in each and every issue.

The Publisher, Staff & Editors

STReport Tenth Anniversary
1987-1997

Florida Lotto - LottoMan v1.35
Results: 1/25/97: 2 of 6 numbers, no matches

From the Editor's Desk...

I've got one of the worst head colds I've had in years so I'll make this short. January is gone and the newer software packages are appearing left and right and are on the way to the stores. We are now using MS Office Pro 97 and the new PhotoShop 4 from Adobe for all our graphic work both in the magazine and on the Website. By the way speaking of the Website, its address is <http://www.streport.com> and our ftp site is <ftp.streport.com> both of these addresses are to site that are maintained on a daily basis as a service to our readers. The FTP site has roughly thirty different file areas offering all our back issues and software support for most every situation. Check the sites out and let us know what you think of them.

We have tow "new" names this week, first, let me welcome Albert Dayes back! Welcome back Albert! Then on to the Alan Harkelroad.. a serious computerist and consultant, Welcome Aboard Alan! Two great guys join the STReport team!

Ralph..

Of Special Note:

<http://www.streport.com>
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STReport is now ready to offer much more in the way of serving the Networks, Online Services and Internet's vast, fast growing site list and userbase. We now have our very own WEB/NewsGroup/FTP Site and although it is in its early stages of construction, do stop by and have a look see. Since We've received numerous requests to receive STReport from a wide variety of Internet addressees, we were compelled to put together an Internet distribution/mailling list for those who wished to receive STReport on a regular basis, the file is ZIPPED, then UUENCODED. Unfortunately, we've also received a number of opinions that the UUENCODING was a real pain to deal with. So, as of October 01, 1995, you'll be able to download

STReport directly from our very own SERVER & WEB Site. While there, be sure to join our STR AutoMailer list.

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STReport Headline News

LATE BREAKING INDUSTRY-WIDE NEWS

Weekly Happenings in the Computer World

Compiled by: Dana P. Jacobson

N.Y. Attorney General to Sue AOL

New York Attorney General Dennis Vacco plans to file suit against America Online, charging the beleaguered online service with promising consumers unlimited access but delivering endless busy signals. United Press International reports that Vacco says he notified AOL of the impending legal action and gave the service five days to show why he shouldn't proceed with the lawsuit.

"The Friday threat follows the filing of class-action suits in several

states by AOL subscribers who claim the company failed them when it began offering unlimited Internet access for a flat fee of \$19.95 a month," notes UPI. Vacco calls the heavily promoted offer "a hollow pitch" and accuses AOL of using "persistently and repeatedly deceptive business practices." He's seeking refunds for frustrated consumers.

AOL, Attorneys General Settle

Facing complaints from attorneys general in 36 states, America Online has agreed to give refunds to customers unable to get online, settling accusations it sold a service it couldn't reliably deliver. As noted, January was been a tough month for the Dulles, Virginia, online service, besieged by irate customers complaining of incessant busy signals after the company launched a new monthly plan of unlimited online time for \$19.95.

"Further straining the company's network," says business writer David E. Kalish of The Associated Press, "was a massive advertising push to expand its membership. ... Several states had threatened to sue America Online unless it promised refunds and stopped promoting the plan." As reported, AOL also was named in a half dozen suits brought by individuals who said the company effectively breached customer contracts.

Under the new agreement, those of the company's customers with recent trouble logging on can request a refund of all or part of the \$19.95 monthly fee, or a month's free access to the online service. "America Online did not admit any wrongdoing," Kalish reports, "but in an acknowledgement it attracted more customers than it could handle, it agreed to largely stop advertising its online service in February and add a disclaimer to ads thereafter if people continue to encounter delays logging on."

Also, the company agreed to make it easier for people to cancel its service, adding phone operators, more lines for customers to fax in their cancellations and detailed online instructions. AOL CEO Steve Case told the wire service in a phone interview, "We have acknowledged with members we underestimated" the company's ability to handle the online usage.

Case declined to estimate the cost of the refund program, but analyst Jamie Kiggen of Cowen & Co. in Boston told AP the refunds should cost the company \$10 million to \$20 million, an amount more than offset by the company's savings from reduced advertising. Kalish says AOL customers can apply for cash refunds by calling 1-800-827-6364, or instead opt for a free month of service by writing P.O. Box 511, Ogden, Utah, 84402-0511. They can cancel service by writing P.O. Box 1600, Ogden, Utah 84401, or faxing 1-801-622-7969.

AOL Sued Over Alleged Child Porn

A Florida woman is suing America Online for allegedly allowing a man later convicted as a sex offender to use the service to sell to pedophiles images of his sex acts with her 11-year-old boy and two other youths. Reporting from the West Palm Beach circuit court, Angus MacSwan of the Reuter News Service quotes the suit as contending AOL has created "a home shopping network for pedophiles and child pornographers," arguing the online service is responsible for the content of the material available on its services and failed to enforce its rules and monitor its subscribers.

One subscriber, former Palm Beach schoolteacher Ron Russell, who is named in the suit, was convicted of an array of sexual charges. "He says he used public channels to exchange phone numbers, tapes and photographs and to

distribute them who knows where," said attorney Brian Smith, representing the woman plaintiff (identified only as "Jane Doe"). "Our claim is that America Online created a marketplace for pedophiles and child pornographers."

Reuters says the suit alleges Russell used the service to sell images of sexual acts involving himself, the woman's 11-year-old son and two other boys he had befriended in 1994. Material was advertised on AOL's electronic chat rooms with titles such as 'Trading Teen Pics' and 'Young Boys for You,'" Reuters adds. The suit seeks \$8 million in damages, a sum attorney Smith says he and his client chose because AOL reports it adds 8 million subscribers, but "how," Smith adds, "can you put a figure on the humiliation and mental anguish suffered?"

Smith acknowledges AOL rules prohibit members from transmitting objectionable, obscene or illegal material, but the suit contends the company has failed to police the rules adequately, adding, "AOL service became known to the pedophile community as a place for open discussion, trading and marketing of child pornography ... in essence AOL Inc. has created a home shopping network for pedophiles and child pornographers."

The suit says AOL ignored complaints concerning Russell and its chat rooms carried exchanges of addresses and telephone numbers for the sale of pornographic material. Russell was arrested in February 1995 after a federal investigation into a ring of men, several of them teachers, who swapped child pornography by computer. Currently, he is serving a 22-year sentence for attempted sexual battery and a 14-year sentence on child pornography charges.

Meanwhile, from AOL's Dulles, Virginia, headquarters, spokesman Andrew Graziani said the service has "no tolerance for this kind of activity" and "the idea that America Online is a safe haven for illegal acts is simply not true. Unfortunately there are some people who will break the law. Illegal acts of this kind are beyond the pale." He said AOL terminated accounts of people who broke its rules and worked closely with law enforcement, adding the service is studying the lawsuit to prepare a response.

Senator Renews Encryption Bill

A measure that would substantially eliminate export restrictions on computer encoding technology is to be reintroduced next week by Sen. Conrad Burns (R.-Montana). Burns spokesman Matt Raymond has told the Reuters News Service, "We are aiming for the 28th (of January) and it will be the same bill as last year."

Reuters notes President Clinton signed an executive order in November slightly relaxing export controls on encryption technology, "but many in Congress and the computer industry have said the new Clinton policy did not go far enough to lift the Cold War era export limits that classified most encryption programs as munitions."

Burns' earlier bill had bipartisan support, but died in the Commerce Committee last year. Raymond told Reuters reporter Aaron Pressman that by since the earlier measure was introduced in the middle of the second year of the 104th Congress, "the calendar and the clock were really working against us. We had a good cross-section of support and we'll start from that baseline this year."

He said Burns expected to hold some hearings on the measure in the

Communications subcommittee he chairs. Says Pressman, "The Clinton administration has repeatedly stated its opposition to the Burns bill, which it said would relax export limits too much, harming law enforcement and national security efforts around the world." Reuters says that in the House of Representatives, Rep. Bob Goodlatte plans to reintroduce his encryption export bill during the first week of February.

Student Cracks Toughest Code

It took a California graduate student only 3 1/2 hours to crack the most secure encryption code the United States has allowed to be exported. RSA Data Security Inc. put its challenge on the Internet on Monday, offering \$50,000 in prizes to those who cracked various levels of encryption codes with electronic key lengths ranging from 40 to 256 bits.

The Associated Press notes the federal government, worried about security, has barred exports of codes higher than 40 bits. Devices with larger numbers of bits are stronger and harder to decode. As reported, the Clinton administration last month began allowing companies to export encryption devices with 56-bit keys -- but only if they have a way for law enforcement officials to crack the code and intercept the communications. Most computer companies have rejected that demand.

In response to the RDS challenge, graduate student Ian Goldberg at the University of California-Berkeley linked together 250 idle workstations that allowed him to test 100 billion possible "keys" per hour. "That's like trying every possible combination for a safe at high speed, and many students and employees of large companies have access to such computational power," AP reports. "In 3 1/2 hours, Goldberg had decoded the message, which read, 'This is why you should use a longer key.'"

Goldberg, who won \$1,000 with his effort, told the wire service the moral is clear: "This is the final proof of what we've known for years -- 40-bit encryption technology is obsolete." Meanwhile, RSA spokesman Kurt Stammberger commented, "The cryptography software that you are allowed to export is so weak as to be useless," saying the results put software exporters in a quandary.

Stammberger notes almost all business software now requires built-in encryption, a necessity for any company doing business over the Internet, but says no one will buy U.S. software that can be cracked by a student in 3 1/2 hours. Adds Stammberger, "You're talking about the U.S. giving up its global dominance in software because of some outdated Cold War spy agencies. People in the industry are pretty angry ... The market is enormous, literally in the hundreds of billions of dollars."

Florida Net Tax Not Suggested

In Tallahassee, Florida, a state task force is recommending that access to the Internet in that state remained untaxed. Instead, says The Associated Press, "the task force is proposing that the existing hodgepodge of state and local taxes on the telecommunication industry be replaced with a single, unified tax levied on all telephone, cellular and cable television providers -- but not Internet access providers."

The wire service notes the 19-member task force was created after business groups objected to a plan announced more than year ago by the state Department of Revenue to begin collecting taxes on Internet access. Following seven months of study, the group says Florida would be perceived as "anti-business" if it became only the sixth state to try to tax access

to computer networks.

Director Larry Fuchs of the Revenue Department and a task force member told the wire service, "The task force believed that taxing anything to do with the Internet is premature." AP says the exact amount of the unified tax and which industries will be subject to it remains to be decided by the Legislature.

Office 97 Anti-Virus Help Offered

Symantec Corp. says it will offer anti-virus support for the new file formats that shipped with Microsoft's Office 97 suite. Virus detection support for Office 97 datafile structures and viruses written in the Visual Basic 5.0 macro language will be available to Symantec customers via free definition files. Designed for use with the company's Norton AntiVirus products, the files are scheduled to become available by March 3 on Symantec's CompuServe Forums, Web site and other locations.

"Office 97 is a departure from prior datafile structures," says Alex Haddox, product manager for the Symantec AntiVirus Research Center. "Current anti-virus technology does not understand the new file formats and, as a result, cannot detect or remove viruses from files using Office 97 technologies. Our solution includes adapting our NAVEX modular engine technology to provide the latest virus protection for Office 97, across Word, Excel and PowerPoint, along with the standard, free Norton AntiVirus and SAM definition sets, which are available to registered users." According to Symantec, 205 viruses have been documented for Word, while 5 have been found in Excel documents.

Feds Study Net Congestion

Federal regulators have begun exploring ways to ease congestion on the Internet by giving companies incentives to provide more high-speed connections into homes. Associated Press writer Jeannine Aversa notes yesterday's gathering was the first Federal Communications Commission hearing on the problem "and," she adds, "comes on the same day another technical glitch temporarily stopped customers of ... America Online, from getting electronic mail. The trouble came as AOL was working on its computers to increase its system's capacity to handle a surge in online usage."

Aversa says the FCC hasn't laid out proposals, but used yesterday's hearing to collect information. FCC Chairman Reed Hundt said the goal is to provide "a climate in which we can create the maximum incentives" for companies to provide faster connections. Adds AP, "Faster connections could be achieved in several ways, including making high-speed digital phone lines, called ISDN, available to more residential telephone customers; using a technology that can provide higher speeds over existing copper phone lines into homes; or using coaxial cable with special modems."

Aversa points out the issue has pitted Internet providers and computer companies against some of the nation's local Bell telephone companies - notably Pacific Telesis and Bell Atlantic - which contend soaring Internet usage could cause a breakdown in the public telephone network. However, Internet and computer companies say congestion is coming from growth in other communications traffic, not just Internet usage, saying phone companies' claims of a network overload are greatly exaggerated, they say. They also oppose financial compensation, which would likely be passed onto customers in the form of higher bills.

FCC officials says that beyond upgrading local phone networks, faster connections can also be achieved with changes to the networks of Internet service providers and to "server" computers from which people get information, for instance. "Right now," notes Aversa, "most home computer users access the Internet with modems that move data at 28.8 thousand bits per second. In some markets, people can buy higher speed digital lines from local phone companies and even faster connections from a few cable companies."

Web Ad Revenue Soars

World Wide Web advertising revenue reached \$171.5 million in 1996, up 170 percent from \$63.5 million in 1995, according to figures compiled by Cowles/Simba Information. The Stamford, Connecticut, market research firm notes that the industry was fueled by tremendous growth in the final fiscal quarter, led by search engines Yahoo!, Infoseek and Excite. Web advertising totaled \$77.0 million in fourth quarter, up 86.9 percent from \$41.2 million in the third quarter.

"Toward the end of the year, many advertisers that had debated whether or not advertising on the Web was worthwhile finally decided to take the plunge -- particularly consumer advertisers," says Matt Kinsman, a Cowles/Simba associate editor. "Early adopters like AT&T and Microsoft continued to build their Web budgets, and now dominate the ad banner market."

Yahoo! led all Web sites in advertising revenue throughout the year, finds Cowles/Simba. The company finished 1996 with \$19 million in ad revenue. Search engines rounded out the top advertisers for the year, with Infoseek generating an estimated \$14.1 million in ad revenue, while Excite posted a year-end total of \$13.5 million. Cowles/Simba Information's Web site is located at www.simbanet.com.

Magaziner Boosts Net Commerce

Senior Clinton advisor Ira Magaziner says that if it does not become over-regulated, electronic commerce over the Internet could become the world's largest trade category within the next decade. In a keynote speech to an Internet Tax Policy Conference in Santa Clara, California, yesterday, the senior White House advisor for policy development said the Internet must remain a free market for electronic commerce to take off.

Writing for the the Reuter News Service, reporter Sael Perry quotes Magaziner as saying, "If we get the right kind of environment in place, we can accelerate this growth so that in a five- to 10-year time frame, trade across the Internet will actually be more than any other category of trade. If we do it wrong, we could spend 30 to 40 years trying to undo bad policy."

As reported, the Clinton administration last month proposed a global electronic commerce framework and put forth a draft policy which proposes making cyberspace a duty-free zone, with no new taxes and minimal governmental regulation. "One of the reasons we wanted to move quickly is we wanted to preempt what we saw as bad policy already being thought about," said Magaziner, adding he knows of a dozen countries contemplating slapping duties on the Internet. He said the White House wanted to be "completely open" in its developing its initiative.

If you want to see the White House draft document, visit the White House home page on the World Wide Web (<http://whitehouse.gov>), where the

administration is collecting responses and hopes to issue a final version of the policy paper in March. Magaziner told the group that intellectual property protection was a key issue, along with fair use, liability and privacy, and he said the overnment's policy towards encryption, which has been sharply criticized here in Silicon Valley, is still evolving.

Of the White House position, he said, "We want to preserve the Internet in its somewhat anarchic form... The economic potential is tremendous, and what we in government must do is make sure we don't mess it up or interfere."

E-Sales Near \$1 Billion

Spurred by growing numbers of Net surfers, electronic sales of tangible goods totaled \$993.4 million in 1996, a 61.8 percent increase over \$613.9 million in 1995, according to research from Cowles/Simba Information. Internet-based sales represented 73.8 percent -- or \$733.1 million -- of all electronic sales in 1996. That figure is projected to grow to \$4.27 billion in 2000, accounting for 85 percent of all elecronic sales.

Cowles/Simba predicts that overall electronic sales -- including those generated through the Internet, commercial online services, CD ROM catalogs, interactive television, kiosks and screen phones -- will reach \$5.03 billion by 2000, reflecting annual growth rates of about 50 percent during the next three years. At \$569.3 million in 1996, electronic sales of business-to-business products, including telecommunications hardware and office supplies, led all product categories. The category is expected to grow to \$2.2 billion in 2000.

"Despite these healthy growth rates, sales in the electronic marketplace have grown more slowly than expected for several reasons," says Karen Burka, editorial director of Cowles/Simba's electronic marketing and online group. "Existing electronic marketplaces -- particularly those in the consumer market -- have not demonstrated clear advantages over more traditional sales channels. Therefore, many potential buyers have not felt the need to change their shopping habits." Visit Cowles/Simba Information on the Web at www.simbanet.com.

Computer Publishing Market Grows

In 1996, for the second year in a row, the rapid rise in popularity of the Internet and an overall increase in the demand for high-tech information were the primary factors influencing growth in the U.S. market for computer publications, finds Cowles/Simba Information. The Stamford, Connecticut, market researcher reports that the U.S. computer publishing market, including magazines, books and online/electronic-based publications, newsletters, journals and looseleafs, grew 11.1 percent to an estimated \$2.69 billion last year.

Cowles/Simba predicts the computer publishing market will grow another 9.7 percent to \$2.95 billion in 1997, with the magazine and book segments continuing to dominate the industry. Computer magazines, which represent the largest segment of the industry with a 57.4 percent market share, are projected to grow revenues 7.4 percent to \$1.66 billion this year, notes Cowles/Simba. Meanwhile, computer book revenues are expected to grow 10.6 percent to an estimated \$863 million.

With public interest in the Internet at a fever pitch, growth in revenues from the online/electronic-based segment of the market continued to outpace all other market segments in 1996, up 47.4 percent to an estimated \$140

million, says Cowles/Simba. The electronic segment of the computer publishing market, which includes dollars generated via Web sites and CD-ROM products created by computer publishers, is forecast to grow another 42.9 percent to \$200 million in 1997, as the industry works toward creating advertising standards and an increasing number of online computer publications submit to third-party site audits.

Computer books represented the second fastest-growing market segment in 1996, with estimated revenues up 15 percent. "The computer book industry has come of age. A category that was once relegated to a shelf or two in leading bookstores has now become one of the trade book industry's primary drivers of growth," says Peter Breen, a Cowles/Simba editor. "As for the impact of the Internet on the computer book market, most publishers are still using their own sites primarily as promotional tools, but online bookstores such as Amazon.com regularly rank among the top retail sites on the Web, indicating the growth potential of a major new channel of distribution."

The market for computer magazines grew more than 8 percent in 1996, according to the researcher. "The development and growth of the computer magazine market has closely mirrored the development and growth of the computer industry itself," says Linda Kopp, a Cowles/Simba senior managing editor. "The continuous evolution of the computer -- first into an indispensable business tool, now into a must-have luxury item for consumers -- has consistently broadened the market and offered countless opportunities for magazine publishers to enter into new areas," says Kopp. "The home computer craze and the public's infatuation with the Internet over the past two years are prime examples of just such opportunities." Visit the Cowles/Simba Information Web site at www.simbanet.com.

PC Shipments Up 18 Percent

Dataquest Inc. analysts say worldwide PC shipments climbed 18 percent in 1996, to 70.9 million units, with Compaq Computer Corp., IBM and Dell Computer Corp. showing the biggest gains. Writing from San Francisco for the Reuter News Service, reporter Kourosh Karimkhany notes struggling Apple Computer Inc. suffered the biggest worldwide decline in shipments, seeing its market share decline further.

And, says Karimkhany, "While the PC industry had robust growth, the increase in unit shipments was less than that in 1995 because of declining growth in the consumer market." Also, companies that specialize in selling PCs to home users, such as NEC Corp.'s Packard Bell NEC Inc. and Apple, suffered amid a lack of exciting new products to draw customers to PC stores, Dataquest said.

Some specifics from Dataquest:

- ' • Compaq retained its position as the No. 1 PC vendor in the world for three years in a row, with 7.1 million units shipped in 1996, an increase of 19 percent from 1995. It widened its market share to 10.1 percent from 10 percent.
- ' • IBM had a strong year as its worldwide PC shipments jumped 28 percent to 6.1 million. Big Blue also increased its market share to 8.6 percent in 1996 from 7.9 percent the previous year.
- ' • Hewlett-Packard Co. showed the largest growth among the top five vendors worldwide as unit shipment surged 52 percent to 2.9 million.

- In the United States, Dell showed the biggest shipment increase with a 71 percent gain to 1.8 million.
- Worldwide, Apple had the biggest decline in shipments as consumers avoided buying the beleaguered company's Performa line of Macintosh computers. Worldwide shipments plunged 22 percent to 3.7 million. Apple's market share in 1996 declined to 5.2 percent from 1995's 7.9 percent.

Scott Miller, senior PC analyst at Dataquest, told the wire service, "Our ongoing consumer research in the U.S. shows increased interest in PC ownership." Whether that means consumer sales will rise again this year is unclear, he said, but "the fundamentals are in place for a strong home market in 1997."

Clinton Seeks School Net Funds

President Clinton says he will ask Congress for some \$500 million to spur education technology and link schools to the Internet. At a press conference yesterday, the president said the Net proposal is included in a Clinton administration education budget proposal. Reporting for The Associated Press, education writer Robert Greene says the education budget proposal also would increase funding by 26 percent, to \$620 million next year, for Goals 2000, a program to help school districts raise educational standards. "The proposal calls for spending \$500 million next year, up from \$257 million in fiscal year 1997, to help schools acquire technology, such as hookups with the Internet," Greene added.

Wang to Sell Software Business

Eastman Kodak Co. and Wang Laboratories Inc. say they have reached an agreement for Kodak to acquire Wang's software business unit for \$260 million in cash. The companies say the deal will allow Wang to focus on its network and desktop integration and services business while strengthening Kodak's position in the growing imaging and work management software market.

The companies say the new software business will operate as a separate Kodak subsidiary, as part of Kodak's business imaging systems organization. Robert K. Weiler, currently president of Wang Software, would become president of the new entity. The 700 employees of Wang Software would become part of the new organization, with headquarters remaining at its current location in Billerica, Massachusetts.

"This contemplated transaction represents an important strategic fit with Kodak's overall imaging businesses," says George M.C. Fisher, Kodak's CEO. "Imaging storage and retrieval ... is important for imaging applications across all Kodak businesses and we believe this would help our customers more effectively integrate imaging into their mainstream businesses."

"We believe this transaction will create several winning outcomes," said Joseph M. Tucci, Wang's chairman and CE. "Our shareholders benefit from the value that Bob Weiler and his team have built for Wang. In addition, our shareholders can count on us to continue building shareholder value by focusing substantial resources on opportunities in the rapidly growing market for networking and desktop integration and services. Wang customers will realize significant benefits from our focus and commitment to high quality services through a global service delivery organization." The acquisition is expected to close within 45 to 60 days.

McAfee to Acquire Jade KK

McAfee Inc., a leading vendor of network security and management software, says it has signed a definitive agreement to acquire Jade KK, a leading anti-virus software vendor with offices in Tokyo and Osaka, Japan, in a \$17 million stock swap deal. The acquisition of Jade is the Santa Clara, California, company's latest move to expand its presence in the Japanese information technology market. Last month, McAfee opened its first Japanese office and hired Masahiro Kano, a veteran of Softbank, Novell and WordPerfect, as president of McAfee Japan.

McAfee says its acquisition of Jade establishes it as one of Japan's leading vendors of anti-virus software. Jade, which produces the Scan Vaccine and Virus Rescue products, has the leading market share in the Japanese government market. McAfee expects the deal to be completed in March. Jade management, including Seiji Murakami, the firm's founder, president and chairman, will stay with the organization as McAfee employees.

Apple Eyes Intel, Microsoft Ties

Word is Apple Computer Inc. is considering closer ties with chipmaker Intel Corp. and software giant Microsoft Corp. Observers have told The New York Times the computer maker may make making a line of machines that run on Intel microprocessors. (Right now, Apple computers run on microprocessors made by Motorola Inc.)

Also, says the Times, Microsoft Chairman Bill Gates visited Apple headquarters in Cupertino, California, earlier this month. the Reuter News Service reports, "The hour-long session was attended by Gates; Apple Chairman Gilbert Amelio; Steven Jobs, Apple's co-founder and head of NeXT Software Corp., recently bought by Apple; and Ellen Hancock, Apple's chief technology officer."

Quoting people familiar with the meeting, the Times said one item was a discussion of the possibility of Apple's licensing Windows NT, Microsoft's industrial-strength operating system for the corporate market. Amelio told the Times that within two or three years, "I would like to have the most compatible personal computer in the industry, able to run more software than anyone -- period," adding, "We're not in a world by ourselves. We have to be able to support the commodity technology standard."

TrueSpace STR Review

"TrueSpace 2 and BEYOND!"

By Allen Harkleroad

TrueSpace... To me that word conjures a vision of surrealistic worlds where anything imaginable is possible. Being as a young person deeply enthralled by science fiction I was never happy at the simple two-dimensional illustrations in the books I read. With the age of computers, three dimensions and photo realistic images are as everyday as paper towels. My fascination with 3D led me to a program from Caligari called Truespace 2. Imagine if you would instant photo-realistic render at lightening speeds.

First things first. The interface is very different from what one would expect from a Windows program. The user interface and menus are very user friendly and a quite visually oriented. Truespace also uses a help toolbar much akin to Windows95's ToolTips. Another words whatever task you are doing the help line displays the description, or use of that particular tool or task. The tools are interactive and clustered very well. I particularly like the dynapick tool, which allows you to move an object or shape by continuing to hold the mouse button. You don't have to change from the tool you have active.

Caligari TrueSpace 2 uses the Intel 3D rendering software engine (Intel 3DR), which affords photo-realistic renderings and a fast rendering time. The lighting special effects are quite spectacular. When editing an object you can actually change color / texture of each individual surface of the object. I know of no other 3D program that allows this so easily, just simply change the paint tool! You can view the scene that you are working on in many various aspects. It even has a preview window so that you can experiment with the scene without actually making the change permanent. All dragging, moving, or deformation of an object(s) is performed in real time, very fluid and smooth.

Animation is also a great feature of TrueSpace. The program even performs key frame animation where you pick the start of the animation and the change or move the object and the program fills in the entire frames in between the beginning and end. This is a great time saving feature for any animation program.

Caligari has many other fine programs including a Virtual Reality Modeling Language program (VRML).

More information on Caligari and their other fine products can be found at www.caligari.com

A T T E N T I O N-A T T E N T I O N-A T T E N T I O N

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A T T E N T I O N-A T T E N T I O N-A T T E N T I O N

Shareware Treasure Chest STR Feature

"The Latest & Greatest"

Shareware Treasure Chest

By Lloyd E. Pulley
lepulley@streport.com

An update about Lloyd. He's doing great and will soon be "back in the saddle".

Debabelizer STR Product Preview

DeBabelizer PRO v4.0

for Windows 95/NT 4.x

By Albert Dayes

What does Tempest, DeBabelizer and Missile Command have in common? Dave Theurer (pronounced "TOY-rer"). In 1980 Atari exploded on the arcade scene with a new coin-op called Missile Command and in 1981 another hit coin-op called Tempest. Both were extremely popular in both the arcade and in their home video game system recreations. Debabelizer first appeared on the Apple Macintosh and has become a very popular software title for anyone involved in the manipulation of graphic images.

One thing you will notice about all of Dave Theurer's work is his attention to detail and Debabelizer is no exception. Debabelizer is a powerful graphics program which was exclusively on the Macintosh until recently.

During the last few months of 1996 Equilibrium began demonstrating the new

version of Debabelizer for Windows 95 / NT v4.x. This was welcome news to Windows users who always wanted a Debabelizer type product on their platform.

Debabelizer PRO v4.x was shipped in late December 1996 with the first service pack released in early January 1997. The software comes on a single CD-ROM and straight forward installation procedure. Be sure to install the video software QuickTime and Indeo Video Interactive software so you can work with AVI movie files. There is no support in current version for generating or editing QuickTime movies but it will be forthcoming in a future upgrade.

GRAPHIC FILE SUPPORT INCLUDES SOME ATARI FORMATS

For those coming from the Atari ST platform will be glad to know that several Atari graphic file formats are supported including Degas, Neo-chrome and Spectrum. The Spectrum pictures in particular are very impressive on the PC when imported using Debabelizer PRO. Currently the program can import and export most of the import file formats that users who manipulate graphics will be happy with the overall support. Over 90 image, animation and digital video formats are currently supported.

METHODS TO MANIPULATE GRAPHICS

One of the best features about Debabelizer PRO is the ability to create script files to automate all your work. Every change that you make to a particular image displayed on the screen creates a log file. This log file contains a list of all operations performed on this image. These commands (operations) can be saved into a script file and used later on another image. You can create a batch list (a list of all images) and run the script against each image in the list and save a considerable amount of time.

Basic image editing tools are available in Debabelizer PRO but there are other programs on the market that provide much more extensive for graphic image editing. There is a section in the preferences section to link in your favorite image editor. In my case I used the Paint Shop Pro 4.1 as my image editor of choice. Just click on the icon or the option under the TOOLS menu and your favorite image editor instantly appears.

Everyone who uses Windows 95 or NT v4.x is very familiar with Windows Explorer for file manipulation. To create an list of files for the batch list one can use the Debabelizer PRO file open command or use Explorer. If you use Explorer you can drag the list of selected files into the empty batch list window to create your new batch list.

In addition when you use the file open command you can choose to have the image, or movie file (.AVI) added directly to your list of files in your batch list in addition to displaying it on the screen.

INTERNET AND WORLD WIDE WEB SUPPORT

When viewing graphics on the world wide web you may have run into problems with different graphic palettes used by the different pictures that can cause strange graphical effects. Viewing these sites on the Internet violate the senses and generally most people want to avoid such sites.

Debabelizer PRO has a solution called the SuperPalette. Basically it takes all of your graphic images and calculates a single palette that best supports all your images. After the SuperPalette is created all of your

images can be remapped to the SuperPalette automatically using a script file.

The second problem is all the plethora of HTML files and finding all of the references to graphic images. Debabelizer PRO has a feature that scans an HTML file and finds all of the graphic references for you automatically. After you create a batch list with all of your HTML files then Debabelizer PRO will scan each file and list all graphics under each HTML file. It appears on the screen as if the HTML file is a directory and the graphic images are in a sub-directory. The next step one creates a SuperPalette and remap all of the graphic images. Finally saving the image files back to disk and you have updated all your images without manipulating each graphic image by hand. The best part is not having to search your HTML files for each reference to a graphic image.

WINDOWS Help File Creation

Creating Microsoft Windows Help files can have similar problems with different palettes using images displayed on the screen. You can create SuperPalettes for your image files used in Windows Help to eliminate this problem. The alternative is add-on dlls for Windows Help v3.x (Windows 3.x) and v4.x (Windows 95 / NT 4.x) like Herd Software's ThinHelp which will change the palette on the fly for each image so this different palettes are no longer a problem. ThinHelp can produce an amazing list of effects for Help files and if you work with Windows Help files it is a product you should seriously consider. A demo and shareware version can be downloaded from the (GO HYPERTEXT) forum or from the Herd Software web site at <http://www.herdsoft.com>

SuperPalettes and ActionArrow

One can create SuperPalettes at any time and save each SuperPalette to disk as an individual file. This allows you to keep a separate palettes for each project you do, consequently it is very easy for experimentation with different palettes as well. There are a few, about 22 predefined palettes that come standard with Debabelizer PRO including a Netscape palette (useful for those working with images for the world wide web).

One of the problems with other graphics programs is applying the exact same process you have performed on one graphic image to another. First imagine looking at any Windows 95 or NT 4 application. At the top right corner are three familiar buttons, close, resize, and minimize. To the left of those buttons is a new button called ActionArrow.

Just think, you now have created the ultimate SuperPalette and you have just constructed a new batch list of all your images for a new web site. What can you do? Simply click on the ActionArrow on the SuperPalette window and drag and drop it into the batch list. Instantly Debabelizer PRO starts updating the SuperPalette based on the content of the images in the batch list. Additionally the operation can be performed by dragging the ActionArrow from batch list to the SuperPalette window. This is a feature I wish more companies would incorporate into their own products.

IS BIG BROTHER WATCHING ME?

Everything you do is being monitored and recorded without your knowledge. After an image file is opened every operation you perform on the image is recorded in a log file. This is similar to having real time version control for image processing. During the creation process it is common to make a perfect picture and then need to duplicate the same effect. With

DeBabelizer PRO it becomes a simple operation by clicking on the log button (in the lower left corner of the image window) providing a list of all operations performed on the image. By copying all of the operations from the log file to a script file you can perform the same operations on a single image or a batch list.

WatchMe allows the user to control the recording process. First you open a new script file and then click on the record button or menu option. All operations you perform are then saved into the script file. Clicking on the record button or the stop recording menu option, stops the recording process. Like any script you can apply it against any image or batch list.

PROGRAMMER'S PRIVELEDGE - SCRIPT FILES

For programmers UNIX and UNIX shells are popular because of the ability to write shell scripts to automate repetitive tasks. For graphics Debabelizer PRO has a large number of operations that can be performed on images or a batch list by using script files. More importantly you do not have to be a programmer to create useful scripts very quickly.

In addition to the methods of creating script files discussed previously, you can build the script entirely by hand. Basically it a point and click operation. Almost every single command in the menu bar is available for use within a script file. You are not limited to a just menu options but can include your own comments within the script file as well.

The diagnostic commands are included for determining the amount of free memory (ram), current date & time or disk space (using a particular drive letter). This is especially helpful running scripts against a large number of images in a batch list. If you are running a script against a single image you can examine the log file for that particular image to check the results of those diagnostic options.

My experience with data and time comment appeared to be wrong until I realized the program was using GMT as the current time and not my current local time in California (GMT-8.0). Equilibrium is aware of this problem and is working on corrective measures.

Scripts may also be used to process images before saving them to disk. I call this pre-exit processing and it has many uses which I will explain in more detail in the movie section, *vida infra*.

MOVIE CREATION AND ALTERATION

With Debabelizer PRO there are two ways to create movies you may alter an existing movie (.AVI file) or create one using MIF(Multiple Image Files).

Using MIFs you can create a simple slide show or powerful video presentation in the form of an movie. First you take all of the images you want to use in the movie and place them into a batch list. Run the create movie option and you now have an AVI movie. Save to disk and you are done.

To modify an existing movie (.AVI file), it must be broken into individual frames. Using the save as batch list function will break up the entire movie into individual frames(or images) automatically. You are not restricted to exporting all of the frames but you can export a subset of all the frames available. Using the green and red makers on the movie dialog play bar will determine which frames will be exported. One nice feature about the movie dialog box is that it displays the current frame being displayed in a separate square. After selecting the select number of

frames it was very easy to export just frames 26 to 35 for example to a batch list.

Each frame is treated as a single image and can be altered using Debabelizer PRO or other image manipulating programs such as Paint Shop Pro. After the frames (a single frame, just a few or the entire list of frames) are processed a new AVI can be created from the batch list with the "create a movie" option.

Example, I downloaded from Microsoft's SoftImage web site a demo AVI file created using SoftImage. The movie which is of a missile being launched is around 1.5 megabytes in size. The first thing I did was to save a batch list and then attempt to reassemble the images back into a movie. The first frame was accepted but all following frames were rejected and so the movie was a paltry 1 frame in length. The solution from the manual is as follows .

"If you plan to create a movie from the BatchList images, you do not want to perform image modifications that result in a different size or color depth between frames. When you create a movie the BatchList images, DeBabelizer Pro will use the size and depth settings from the first image (frame) and reject all subsequent images of a different size or depth."

Using the set from image option (within the save file dialog box) for both the save in file format and the save at color depth solved this problem quickly. Reassembling the movie from the batch list worked perfectly this time.

The missile launch movie was using 24-bit color but I wanted to reduce it to 8-bit color (256 colors). Using one of the existing script files which would create a SuperPalette from the batch list and then save with the new palette I continued.

THRASH AND CRASH

After the SuperPalette was created Debabelizer PRO opened each image file (displayed on the screen) to perform the remap to the SuperPalette and then save the image back to disk. Consider that each image is a 24-bit color image and with 134 images to display a catastrophe was about to happen.

As the program displayed the many images, everything appeared flawless until strange streaks started to appear on the screen. Tried to switch to other applications and not enough memory error message appeared. Then the machine just hanged. After rebooting and make sure that only Debabelizer PRO was running but the same crash and thrash problem continued.

I installed the first service pak for Debabelizer PRO but still had problems. Frustrating as it was I tried different methods to get something to work. I reinstalled the software, checked service paks, uninstalled software that might be considered dangerous, check configuration files, and so forth. The problem was really due to not having enough ram in spite of the fact that 64 megabytes were present on the Pentium Pro machine.

SPEAK IN SCRIPT JUST PRE-EXIT PROCESS

Fortunately there are more than one method to do almost everything in Debabelizer PRO. I did everything in separate steps for a start. First I created the SuperPalette from the batch list. Then I created a script to perform the remap to the SuperPalette. Then when using the save dialog box I picked the Pre Save Do Script and attached my script to it. As each image

was saved it was remapped to my newly created SuperPalette before being saved. Everything was accomplished easily using the scripts to do the hard work.

Using the SuperPalette and script combination together, allowed for a reduction from a 24-bit color palette to a 8-bit palette that resulted in a smaller file size. This was recreated into a movie which was slightly smaller than the original one, using only 256 colors and looked just as good as the original movie.

What is the amazing is that you can reduce the palette and the resulting image looks just as good as the original. Of course if you really scrutinize the image you will notice some differences.

NO LONGER BLUE IN THE FACE

Imagine a picture of the person you admire most, standing against a blue-green background. Upon closer examination you realize that it would be a perfect picture to add to your web site. But how do you take the image of the person without the background? Using traditional methods you can zoom into the image thus removing the offending pixels one by one. The final step involves using a cut function of the graphics program to remove the part of the image you desire to another window or clipboard.

The problems are time consuming and tedious. The solution is of course Debabelizer PRO blue screen removable option. Select the range of colors using the mouse on the image that you want to remap. Choose your fill color and everything is remapped to the single color. Extremely useful for isolating individual elements and creating transparency for creating images for the World Wide Web.

OTHER FEATURES

There are so many features for graphics manipulation it is amazing. Some of these features include channel control, contrast, gamma, hue, saturation, flip, rotate, trim image and scaling.

Support for Adobe PhotoShop filters support is a big one. There are many third party ones available and a few demos were included. The demos worked some of the time at other times they crashed my machine. One filter was to change the image to make it appear as if it were an old movie with scratches on the film, and so forth. More companies are working on making sure that their Adobe filters also work with Debabelizer PRO.

The DPI setting for printing allows you to scale your image to a specific DPI setting. I changed the spectrum image from 72 dpi (default) to 300x300 with or without scaling. You can also control dithering, background color and a few other options. The results of printing a image displayed on the screen can vary greatly. But I was impressed with the results for image printing. Even the spectrum-512 image (profile.spc) came out very nicely especially when scaled to 300 x 300 dpi.

There are still many aspects of the program I have not covered and could not begin to cover without significantly more time. I just covered the aspects of the program I have worked with and found them useful. The most significant of all is just the power to create scripts for everything.

DOCUMENTATION and SUPPORT

The documentation (paper manual) is around 323 pages in size and covers

several sections such as:

- `• Debabelizer Pro Basics
- `• Working With Images
- `• Working with Movies and MIFs
- `• Working with Scripts
- `• Working with BatchLists
- `• Using Channels and Masks
- `• Command Reference
- `• Appendix A: File Formats
- `• Appendix B: FAQ
- `• Glossary of Terms
- `• Index

Overall the manual does satisfactorily explain the different features. The online Windows help files are very helpful for getting a good start without having to read the manual all the time.

The Equilibrium web site can be accessed directly from the Debabelizer PRO menu option (or button depending if the toolbar is displayed). The web site includes the normal company news, feature lists, software updates. The FAQ question file for Debabelizer PRO for Windows was recently added. It has many good suggestions about accomplishing different tasks more effectively and is highly recommended.

Support so far has been very good. E-mail inquiries (thanks to Chris Caracci) have been turned around in 24-48 hours. I even received a US Mail postcard telling me of the service pack on the web site. Surfing their web site regularly is a good idea and is strongly recommended.

SUGGESTIONS

The QuickTime for Windows 95/NT v4.x included on the CD-ROM is an older beta copy. Download the latest version from the (GO MACMULTI) or the Apple QuickTime web site:

<http://www.quicktime.apple.com>

DEBABELIZER THE MOVIE

Watch the QuickTime movie included on the CD-ROM. It has discussions with many different users of the original MAC version of Debabelizer. It is entertaining as well as enlightening to see how Debabelizer solves many different problems. The movie can run in multiple languages including English, German, French and Spanish. There are some other languages too but I do not recall the specifics. You can change the language in real-time with just a simple mouse click.

Check the Equilibrium web site regularly.

WISH LIST

Debabelizer PRO has many features but of course there is always a wish list.

1. Ability to display PostScript code (similar to GhostScript)
2. Some support for audio in .AVI movie files

CONCLUSION

If you work with a large number of graphic files and need to perform many different operations on the many different files then Debabelizer PRO is the program for you. The best benefit is that it complements your existing graphic tools like PhotoShop or PaintShop Pro rather than replacing them. Any type of palette reduction or remapping makes this a tool for you.

There are a few programs on the market including the one from JASC suitable for converting graphics from one type to another in batch format. Since Debabelizer captures all operations performed to a log for each image displayed on screen, it is very easy to create scripts to duplicate the same effect on other images. With the log of operations it encourages the creation of script. In addition almost every single menu option available can be scripted to automate everything. To modify an existing script is a simple point and click operation.

It should be fairly obvious that I like the product. The program does a very good job considering it is the first release on a different platform. It will be interesting to see what future releases will be like and how the competition responds.

My suggested minimum requirements are a Pentium or Pentium PRO with 32 megabytes of ram as a minimum. I was running it on a Pentium PRO-200mhz with 64 megabytes under Windows 95 during which time I never noticed any slow down in what I was doing (each person's needs will be different). The stated minimum requirements are 16 megabytes of ram with a 486 machine by the way.

If you are looking for a good price on Debabelizer Pro check the mail order pricing.

At the end of the document I have included additional references for books, and online sources (CompuServe and Internet) for further study. Of course contact information for Equilibrium is also included. See the features of Debabelizer PRO listed later on for some of the other features not mentioned previously or in this document.

I always wondered if discussion about the "amazing" Debabelizer was only hype. After using the product for almost a month I can see the truth in most of the positive comments about it. Knowing that Dave Theurer was involved I should have known that it was. I would highly recommend Debabelizer to anyone working extensively with graphics. One phrase I found on the web site which I think is perfect for closing word on this product.

Debabelize - Evangelize

Some of the features listed for Debabelizer PRO (from the brochure)

- '• Robust File Manipulation
- '• DeBabelizer Pro reads and writes over 90 different image, animation and digital video file types.
- '• Define and display all your graphics in a batch list window. Lists can be opened or shared with others.
- '• HTML parsing extracts all graphics from an HTML file and places them in a batch list for easy SuperPalette creation.

Batch lists can be created by dragging files from Windows Explorer onto a

list, or generated "on the fly" when you define an input "Source". Sources can be any of the following:

- ˆ• All opened files currently on screen
- ˆ• All files in a specified directory
- ˆ• Photoshop Acquires and Imports
- ˆ• TWAIN compliant device Imports

Special Tools

Blue Screen Removal - identify a hue range to be removed and remapped to one color. This is especially useful for web publishers creating objects with transparency or for multimedia developers processing thousands of cells of blue screen animation. Determine the color range to be remapped, and all your frames are handled automatically!

- ˆ• Field Interpolate allows you to merge and separate scan line fields for clean-up of video and rendered animations.
- ˆ• NTSC/PAL Hot Pixel Fixer finds and corrects invalid color ranges for NTSC or PAL output situations. Especially useful when processing digital video or image files to guarantee all colors will conform to video display limitations.
- ˆ• Text Overlay allows you to overlay any custom text onto an image, multi-frame, batch list or movie at any location you specify. Special commands for placing image information are: Disk space, frame #, memory, size, path, Name of image, width and height, DPI, Timer and Counter settings.
- ˆ• Full Photoshop r Filter, Import and Export support Automatically process images with a desired filter or multiple filters. Save filter settings for later use in scripts. Filter interpolate creates unique special effects by incrementing filter settings over just one image file input repetitively or over multiple images or frames.

Automate Your Creative Process

- ˆ• Versatile Scripting and Batch Processing frees you to focus on creative work. Batch Automation steps you through all of the information DeBabelizer Pro needs to handle batch processing.
 - ˆ• Inline Scripting makes editing scripts a snap. Simply double click on any command in the Script window, and you get the dialogue box to modify settings on the fly.
 - ˆ• The ProScripts T Wizard steps you through the creation of some of the most popular scripts you will need. These are constantly being added and will be made available free of charge from our Web site:
1. Web Graphics preparation - This Wizard automatically saves images to JPEGs or creates GIFs (thumbnails and original size) with the option to reduce to either a 128 color SuperPalette or 216 color Netscape palette.
 2. Remapping to Windows Palette - Remaps images to 256 colors with the first and last ten reserved for Windows 3.1/95 and NT color palette.

Image Processing Tools

- Resize Canvas - adjust canvas size without scaling the image. Resizing options - absolute, common, specific, relative and percentage with the ability to define the placement of image on canvas.
- High Quality Scaling to specific size, to half size or double size. Also includes automatic PC to Mac and Mac to PC aspect ratio adjustment.
- Flip, Rotate or Trim the image.
- Adjust DPI Resolution.
- Intensity, Contrast, Gamma, Hue, Saturation and Brightness controls with full preview. Set specific settings and save them for later application.
- Channels Control allows quick viewing of RGB and Alpha channels. You can swap and shift channels from one location to another. Draw in selected channels as well as cut, copy and paste into and out of channels.

The Ultimate Color and Palette Handler

SuperPalette T is Equilibrium's powerful proprietary method for creating the best palette for a series of images, automatically. SuperPalette keeps all of the information from prior images so you never have to recreate it, you can simply add more images to be calculated into the existing palette.

- Set Pixel Depth to reduce or increase color depth.
- Set Palette and Remap reduces colors to any of the 22 built-in palettes or any customized palette and respects off-limit colors.
- Reduce Colors combines color reduction with the ability to utilize an existing base palette.
- Convert to Black and White with ordered, Albie or threshold color reduction.
- Remove Unused or Duplicate Colors - clears repetitive colors reducing the palette without affecting the image.
- Merge Palettes quickly creates a new palette by merging the selected image's palette with any source palette.
- Equalize Palette evenly distributes colors by brightness, saturation or both.
- Sort Palette in ascending or descending order by RGB, HSB, HBS or Popularity.
- Create New Palette or Palette Image File The Ultimate Color and Palette Handler Robust

Minimum Requirements:

486 or faster processor running Windows 95 or NT 4.x (Pentium recommended)
16 MB of ram 32 recommended.
20 MB of hard-disk space for installation
20 MB of hard-disk space for operation
256 color or greater display adapter
CD-ROM drive

Twain 32 Compliant

Photoshop Filter, Import and Export Compatible
Optimized for Intel MMX technology
Optimized for Pentium Processors
Optimized for Pentium Pro Processors

Equilibrium
Three Harbor Drive, Suite 111
Sausalito, CA 94965
(415) 332-4343 (voice)
332-4433 (FAX)
<http://www.equilibrium.com>

Debabelizer Pro v4.x for Windows 95 / Windows NT 4.x
current version: 4.0.0.100
retail price: \$595

Note: Debabelizer for the MAC is also available

References:

Encyclopedia of Graphics File Formats, 2nd Edition
by James D. Murray & William vanRyper (includes CD-ROM)
1154 pages, (May 1996)
ISBN: 1-56592-161-5
<http://www.ora.com>

Video Demystified : A Handbook for the Digital Engineer, 2nd Edition
by Keith Jack (CD-ROM included for PC and MAC)
800+ pages, (1996)
ISBN: 1-878707-23-X

The standard video reference for digital and software engineers is now more comprehensive than ever. This new completely updated edition of Video Demystified : A Handbook for the Digital Engineer, by Keith Jack, is packed with 800 pages of hard-to-find reference information. It covers all international video standards, MPEG 1 and MPEG 2, design architectures for incorporating video into computer systems, video conferencing, digital encoding/decoding techniques, and much more.

The accompanying CD-ROM for PC and Macintosh is loaded with design tools to assist in testing and evaluating video systems. Files include still images at various resolutions, QuickTime moves, source code for MPEG, H.261, H.263 encoders/decoders, and several other software tools.

JASC, Inc.
P.O. Box 44997
Eden Prairie, MN 55344
(612) 930-9171 (voice)
<http://www.jasc.com>

Product: Paint Shop Pro v4.1

Online References:

CompuServe
(GO MACMULTI) - Mac multi-media forum, QuickTime movie players in lib #7
(GO DTVFORUM) - Desktop Video Forum
(GO HYPERTEXT) - for Windows Help authoring, htmlHELP and more
(GO INETPUB) - for Internet / Web Page / HTML related publishing
(GO ADOBE) - Adobe products : PhotoShop, Acrobat, PostScript, etc.
(GO JASC) - JASC support for Paint Shop Pro and other products

Internet:

<http://www.adobe.com> - Adobe Corporation
<http://www.quicktime.apple.com> - QuickTime related information
<http://www.microsoft.com> - Microsoft Corporation

http://www.clbooks.com	- Computer Literacy bookstores
http://www.herdsoft.com	- Herd Software creator of ThinHelp
http://www.equilibrium.com	- Equilibrium home of Debabelizer
http://www.ff.com	- ForeFront creators of ForeHelp & ForeHTML
http://www.jasc.com	- JASC, Paint Shop Pro and other products
http://www.ora.com	- O'Reilly & Associates - technical book publishers

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FCC HEARING FOCUSES ON INTERNET BOTTLENECKS

The Federal Communications Commission met Thursday to discuss ways of easing congestion on the Internet by providing "a climate in which we can create the maximum incentives" for companies "to enable faster connections," said FCC Chairman Reed Hundt. Faster connections could be achieved by making advanced technologies such as ISDN, ADSL and cable links more available to residential customers. The telephone companies warn that increasing Internet usage could cause a breakdown in the public telephone network, but Internet companies contend that the congestion is attributable to growth in other communications services, not just the Internet. "If the commission awards large new fees to local telephone companies for access to the local networks, there will be a significant

risk that the only winners will be the phone companies, while consumers and the entire Internet online industry will lose," says an America Online VP. (Tampa Tribune 24 Jan 97 B&F1)

INTERNET COALITION SAYS, "WHAT GRIDLOCK?"

The Internet Access Coalition has released a study that refutes telephone company claims that increased use of the Internet is jamming their lines. Rather, the increase in data traffic has produced just a few localized logjams, and has generated additional revenues for local exchange carriers that "far exceed" the costs of providing access. The study suggests that the main problem is the telephone companies' reliance on circuit switching equipment rather than packet switching gear for data transmission. Phone company officials dispute the findings: "The fact is Internet usage has grown more than 100% over the past 10 years, and is predicted to grow more than 700% by the year 2001. Someone has to pay for that usage, the subsequent wear and tear on the network, and the new equipment additions necessitated by this rapid growth," says the head of the U.S. Telephone Association. (BNA Daily Report for Executives 23 Jan 97 A25)

DIGITAL LIBRARIES: THE FUTURE

The vision of computers powerful enough to organize and index huge treasure troves of scientific literature using intelligent functions such as "vocabulary switching" -- classifying an article that mentions "Unix" under "operating systems" even if the words "operating systems" do not appear in the article -- is finally coming to fruition, 32 years after it was first outlined in J.C.R. Licklider's "Libraries of the Future" (1965). Large-scale simulations on the HP Convex Exemplar supercomputer at the National Center for Supercomputer Applications have resulted in generating concept spaces for 10 million journal abstracts across 1,000 subject areas covering all engineering and science disciplines -- the largest vocabulary switching computation ever achieved in information science. Future developments will require automatic indexing with scaleable semantics to coordinate searches among the one billion repositories likely in the next century. (Science 17 Jan 97 p327)

DIGITAL LIBRARIES: THE PRESENT

Kenneth E. Dowlin has been forced to resign his position after serving almost 10 years as head of the San Francisco Public Library, where he was a creative proponent of the use of information technology in the modern library. Critics charged that he favored technology over books. Peter Lyman, the University Librarian at the University of California at Berkeley, says in support of Mr. Dowlin: "It's so sad to be debating books versus computers, when the issues facing San Francisco are of literacy, of immigrant populations. The public library needs to be a place that helps children learn the basic skills of literacy, that helps immigrants become citizens. Ken was trying to create a sense of political community through technology, and the new library is in many ways successful on those grounds." (New York Times 26 Jan 97 p8)

COMPUTER IN A COFFEE CUP

While a conventional computer stores its bits of information by assuming one of two possible states (a 1 or a 0), a quantum computer theoretically could store much more information by using all the potential states of an atom. Scientists are now proposing a new way to harness the power of quantum computing, using nuclear magnetic resonance devices to control the movement of millions of atoms within an evenly heated volume of material.

By coordinating the nuclear spin of the particles, physicists could make them act collectively as qubits (quantum bits). A liquid with the right thermal properties (such as coffee, which is known for its unusually even heating characteristics) could hold up to 10 qubits, but scientists are still looking for ways to create a liquid computer that could hold up to 40 qubits -- perhaps out of "a really expensive cup of structured coffee," says a University of California, Santa Barbara researcher. (Science News 18 Jan 97 p37)

APPLE WANTS "MOST COMPATIBILITY IN INDUSTRY"

Apple CEO Gil Amelio concedes some "disappointments" in the past year and admits that "it has been tougher to turn Apple around than I had expected," but insists that within two or three years the company will "have the most compatible personal computer in the industry, able to run more software than anyone else -- period." Eleven days ago Amelio and top associates (Ellen Hancock and Steve Jobs) met with Microsoft CEO Bill Gates to discuss ways of cooperating, including the possibility of Apple licensing from Microsoft the Windows NT operating system for the corporate market. Amelio says: "We're not in the world by ourselves. We have to be able to support the commodity technology standard." In addition, a number of new Macintosh products are in the works, and next month will see the introduction of a new line of Powerbook notebook computers, which, at 200 megahertz, will run at faster speeds than most "Wintel" notebooks running on Windows software and Intel chips. (New York Times 26 Jan 97 p16)

KENT STATE'S DISTRIBUTED LEARNING PROGRAM

Kent State University's Distributed Learning Program is using LearnLinc, a PC-based distributed learning software environment developed by ILINC (Interactive Learning International Corp.). The software allows teachers to structure and control their distance learning courses, and also includes a LearnLinc Question & Answer component that allows professors to immediately assess student levels of course content knowledge by viewing their scores as they're quizzed online. An electronic hand raising feature lets the instructor or the students ask a question at any time. Instructors also control the students' screens at all sites. (Syllabus Jan 97) < <http://www.ilinc.com> >. An article related to this activity will appear in the March/April issue of Educom Review.

INTERNET FOR LIFE

Is California starting another new trend? Two small Internet service providers in San Jose are offering lifetime access to the Net for a one-time registration fee (\$59.95 from TGGH Inc's "Bigger Net" or \$29.95 from Hyper Net USA Inc.'s "Cyber FreeWay"). The companies plan to make money selling advertisements that will appear in a small window on the user's screen. Presumably the service could continue into the Afterlife at no extra charge providing the user remains amenable to looking at the ads. (Wall Street Journal 25 Jan 97 D2)

INFORMIX SUES ORACLE OVER PEOPLE PIRACY

Informix Corp. filed a lawsuit in Portland, Ore., last week, charging that arch-rival Oracle Corp. "pirated away" 11 key engineering employees. The filings alleges that Oracle engaged in "a conspiracy to misappropriate Informix's intellectual property and gain an unfair advantage in the competitive market for database computer access systems." An Oracle senior VP called the charges "ludicrous" and says the defectors were hired

only after they'd been rejected by Microsoft. He adds that the new employees were asked to purge their computers, cars and houses of any trade secrets before coming to work. "We have absolutely no interest in Informix's trade secrets or technology." (Wall Street Journal 27 Jan 97)

DONKEY KONG U. TO OFFER DEGREES IN VIDEOGAME DESIGN

The DigiPen Applied Computer Graphics School, nicknamed "Donkey Kong University" after the popular videogame, will open a four-year campus in Seattle next year, replacing the two-year program it's sponsored in Vancouver, B.C. for the last few years. DigiPen has already been approved as a nonprofit institution by the Washington State Higher Education Coordinating Board, and plans to admit the first class of 100 students, each paying \$12,000 a year in tuition, next fall. The school says it's the first institution to offer a four-year degree in videogame design. Its only competitors are a few programs in Japan, all of which are two-year. (Chronicle of Higher Education 31 Jan 97)

FCC RULE COULD STYMIE MOVE TO 56-KPBS

An FCC rule that limits the amount of power that can be used to send data over a telephone line has makers of high-speed modems concerned that their new 56-Kpbs products won't perform as well as promised. The companies have petitioned the FCC to waive the rule, claiming it is based on out-of-date technologies, and a meeting is scheduled next month to discuss the matter. "You can still get 56-Kpbs even within the federal limits, but you'd get it more of the time without the rule," says a spokesman for Lucent Technologies' modem group. "It doesn't put a nail in the coffin of 56-Kpbs, it just means you won't get that speed so often." The FCC rule was made when telephone lines were almost exclusively analog, and was designed to prevent cross talk between cabled wire pairs in analog carrier systems. (InfoWorld Electric 24 Jan 97)

IBM TEAMS WITH 3COM, CASCADE ON NETWORKING

IBM is teaming up with networking companies 3Com and Cascade Communications to develop a new approach to IP switching that they say is five times faster than the current technologies being used. In the past year, numerous companies have called for using IP switching as a replacement for the routers that direct electronic messages to their proper destination. The problem is that no two companies have agreed on how the new IP switches would work -- IBM's pact with 3Com and Cascade is seen as a first step in that direction. (Wall Street Journal 27 Jan 97)

NET GAINS

A larger percentage of Japanese PC households are online compared to U.S. PC households (18% vs. 16%), says IDC/Link. But Western European PC households are the most willing to do business online, with more than a third saying they've used the Net to purchase goods and services (compared to 22% in the U.S. and 17% in Japan). (Investor's Business Daily 28 Jan 97)

MICROSOFT MOVING UP IN BROWSER BATTLES

Microsoft is gaining ground in its war with Netscape over browser software penetration. In the business market, which numbers 30- to 34-million users, Netscape's share has dipped to 70%, down from 87% early last year, according to Zona Research Inc. And its share of the business server software is falling, too -- 75% last September, down from almost 100% the

previous year. Netscape's strategy to reverse its fortunes is pinned on its new suite of Communicator software, which allows corporate workers to collaborate on documents and scheduling over company intranets. (Wall Street Journal 28 Jan 97)

ONLINE FILMS

The American Film Institute's OnLine Cinema debuted last week, presenting the 20-minute Charlie Chaplin comedy "The Rink" (1916) in its entirety, complete with musical score, over the Internet. The AFI uses VDonet Corp.'s VDOLive "streaming" software to allow for instantaneous viewing. (Tampa Tribune 27 Jan 97) < <http://www.afionline.org/cinema> >

AOL TO GIVE REFUNDS TO CUSTOMERS WHO COMPLAIN

America Online will give refunds on a "case-by-case" basis to customers who complain about excessive busy signals caused by heavy subscriber activity that began after AOL recently introduced a flat-rate pricing plan. Refunds to customers who call the company may take the form of free online service instead of cash. (Washington Post 27 Jan 97)

AMAZON TO GET COMPETITION FOR ONLINE BOOK-SELLING

Amazon.com, Inc., which pioneered the business of using the Internet for book-selling, will soon face competition from online bookselling services being developed by traditional bookstore companies Barnes & Noble and the Borders Group Inc. The Barnes & Noble service will begin on AOL and will extend access to all Internet users in the Spring. The company will offer 30% discounts on the cover price of hardcover books, which is a steeper discount than its own stores offer. (Wall Street Journal 28 Jan 97)

AT&T REACHES OUT (GENTLY) INTO LOCAL PHONE BUSINESS

AT&T will soon offer local phone service to small and medium sized business customers in California, but will use leased lines from Pacific Telesis rather than build its own local operation. In contrast, MCI has spent \$1 billion to build network infrastructure in 18 cities around the country. (New York Times 28 Jan 97)

AMERICA (TRYING TO GET BACK) ONLINE

In an attempt "to do what it takes to fix the problems members are experiencing as a result of the extraordinary demand for AOL," caused by its energetically promoted flat-fee pricing plan, America Online CEO Steve Case says the company will give refunds in cash or time to customers who experienced difficulties connecting to AOL. The company has pledged to make various improvements in customer service, and to suspend advertising for new customers. AOL has been accused by some subscribers of fraudulently overselling their service beyond what it knew it was capable of accommodating. (Atlanta Journal-Constitution 30 Jan 97)

SURFING FOR PORN, PAYING IN PHONE BILLS

A scam on the Internet has cost some Canadian victims up to \$1,200 to download pornography from certain Web sites. In the scam, surfers are told that looking at nude pictures is free but that a "special image viewer" must be clicked on and downloaded to your computer. The viewer is actually a virus that disconnects your modem from the regular local Internet service provider and surreptitiously reconnects the call to a number in Moldavia, in the former Soviet Union, generating long-distance

charges. Canadian federal police have ordered that all calls from Canada to the number in Moldavia not be connected. (Toronto Star 29 Jan 97)

U.S. SAYS INDECENT MATERIAL WILL RUIN EDUCATIONAL VALUE OF NET

A U.S. Justice Department legal brief filed with the Supreme Court last week cites the educational value of the Internet in its argument for banning "indecent" material: "Much of the Internet's potential as an educational and informational resource will be wasted," says the statement, "if people are unwilling to avail themselves of its benefits because they do not want their children harmed by exposure to patently offensive sexually explicit material." Therefore, it concluded the government has a "compelling interest in furthering the First Amendment interest of all Americans to use what has become an unparalleled educational resource... It is better to place some burdens and costs on those who disseminate patently offensive material through use of a new and rapidly changing technology than it is to leave children unprotected." A lawyer for the ACLU, which has challenged the law, called the government's argument "outrageous" and oxymoronic. (Chronicle of Higher Education 31 Jan 97)

DELOITTE, MERCHANT GROUP TO DELIVER SECURE E-MAIL DOCUMENTS

Accounting firm Deloitte & Touche is teaming up with private merchant group Thurston Group to provide an electronic service called NetDox Inc., which will offer banks, insurance companies, law firms and others a means of transferring legal documents via a secure electronic system. NetDox will track the documents through delivery, will return a receipt to the sender, and will retain an electronic "thumbprint" of the document in case any questions regarding its authenticity or delivery time arise. The service should be operational by summer. (Wall Street Journal 30 Jan 97)

BOEING'S JUMBO NET

The Boeing Co. is known worldwide for its jumbo jets, but now its Boeing Internal Web is being held up as the best example of corporate intranet implementation in the country. "Boeing is the biggest corporate Intranet," says a Netscape VP. "Boeing is one of the leading companies to see the benefits of standards-based computing and is ahead of the pack in truly leveraging that benefit." More than 50,000 employee workstations are wired to the system, and new users are being added at the rate of about 500 a week. The company's ultimate goal is to provide unrestricted access for up to 200,000 employees. The Internal Web is a conglomerate of 412 separate Web sites, some of them comprising as much as 17,000 pages. The sites are used for, among other things, group work on projects, eliminating the need to relocate some employees, and responsibility for site content is delegated downward, to the group or division responsible for that function. "They use a distributed management approach, and frankly that's the only way to do it," says the president of an information technology management consultancy group. "The issue is content. If you have IT people managing content they would do nothing else but manage phone lists, product descriptions and human resources information. The content has got to be delegated to the divisions, because that's where the accountability is." (Communications Week Interactive 24 Jan 97)

FBI CRACKS DOWN ON SOFTWARE PIRACY

Following an eight-month investigation, the FBI is mounting raids in seven

states to nab software pirates who make illegally copied software available over electronic bulletin boards. In some cases the software was posted before it became commercially available. (Investor's Business Daily 29 Jan 97)

SILICON GRAPHICS TO MAKE SOFTWARE FOR RIVAL MACHINES

Silicon Graphics, realizing that it must expand its horizons beyond the high-end workstation market, is adapting its 3-D Internet graphics software, Cosmo Worlds, to run on Intel-based PCs using Microsoft's Windows NT operating system. Silicon CEO Ed McCracken says the company also is looking "very seriously" at making a similar move with its special-effects software. The Cosmo Worlds software will be available on PCs by the end of the year. (Wall Street Journal 29 Jan 97)

E-MAIL FORGER FACES JAIL TERM

A former Oracle employee faces up to six years in prison for perjury, falsification of evidence, and breaking into a computer network, because she forged an e-mail message to support her charge that she was terminated from the company for breaking up a personal relationship with the company's chief executive. (Atlanta Journal-Constitution 29 Jan 97)

CLINTON ADVISOR DEFENDS ENCRYPTION PLAN

The Clinton Administration's special envoy to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development told a computer security conference that the Administration's policy "in no way seeks to expand the powers of law enforcement nor reduce the privacy protections of individuals." The Clinton "key escrow" plans calls for creation of a de facto global communications standard in which the key algorithms needed for unscrambling messages would be placed "in escrow" with separate authorities. The president of the Information Technology Association of America, an industry trade group, says the plan "could have a detrimental effect on international trade and the world's ability to use the Internet for international commerce." (New York Times 29 Jan 97)

COURT SAYS UNIVERSITY CAN RESTRICT INTERNET ACCESS

A federal judge in Oklahoma has rejected a challenge made by a University of Oklahoma professor to the university's decision to restrict access to Internet news groups in order to protect itself against possible federal obscenity charges. The professor argued that the restriction violated his First Amendment right to free speech, but Judge Wayne E. Alley ruled against him, saying he had not demonstrated that he was "irreparably harmed" by the university's policy and had presented no evidence that anyone had ever tried

to reach the news groups. (New York Times 29 Jan 97)

UPSIDE'S LOOKS DOWN ON WIRED'S DOWNSIDE

Upside and Wired, two magazines competing for a high-tech readership, seem to be stuck in a long-running feud. Responding to an Upside reporter's request for an interview with Wired cofounder Louis Rossetto, a Wired spokesman said that Rossetto "is in no mood to cooperate with Upside in any way. They've gone out of their way to trash us for no apparent reason." On Upside's Web site a columnist had characterized Wired Ventures' attempt at an initial public offering as a "mangy dog of a stock offering that deserved, if only for mercy's sake, to be taken out and shot," and in the current issue Upside says that, on a balance sheet basis, Wired Ventures

should sell for about \$6 million to \$10 million -- "a far cry from the pie-in-the sky \$447 million" the company claimed its value to be last May or "the nearly-as-silly \$293 million it tried to get away with in the revised September offering." (Upside Feb 97)

Edupage is written by John Gehl (gehl@educum.edu) & Suzanne Douglas (douglas@educum.edu).

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Technical support is provided by the Office of Information Technology, University of North Carolina.

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INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY CONFERENCE

The CAUSE organization's annual conference on information technology in higher education is scheduled for the end of this month in New Orleans. The conference will bring together administrators, academicians and other managers of information resources. For full conference information check out <<http://cause-www.colorado.edu>> or send e-mail to conf@cause.colorado.edu.

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To: rmariano@streport.com From: Marlin Simmons <linlee@rica.net> Subject:
reply to editorial Date: Sat, 25 Jan 1997 01:04:17 -0700

Message-ID: <19970125080416187.AAA260@har-dialin-9.rica.net>

X-UIDL: 232c2af29bd5973410d5905aa2e423ef

Status: U

I don't know about the local ISPs problems you mention in your editorial but AOL's problems are clearly not some sort of conspiracy. In the article in the same issue the lawyer for one of the plaintiffs with a lawsuit against AOL says that according to figures published by AOL they can only connect 3.5% of their customers at any one time. My local ISP maintains a 10% connect capacity and it is not uncommon to take 5 minutes to connect during peak hours with an occasional 10 to 15 minutes being required. AOL simply doesn't have anywhere near the capacity to handle their increased usage.

On the subject of the lawsuits against AOL, let me just say I think they are ridiculous. The most any individual should be able to claim as a loss is the current months charge. If they don't cancel after a month of difficulty connecting then they are accepting the current level of service.
Marlin Simmons

Reply.. to Mr. Simmons

Thank you for reading our humble offering.. The Editorial in STR 1304 has indeed done it's job. We've received a large number of emails regarding our comments about the bottlenecks being "enjoyed" by many when attempting to access either the 'Net or AOL.

Please understand we are not, in any way, defending or excusing AOL at all. They brought this problem on themselves with their off-the-wall sales tactics. Had the Whigs at AOL done their homework they never would've made such outlandish offers in the first place. Its fairly obvious to even the casual user that AOL's actions were aimed at putting the competition away. Especially the smaller ISPs in every city in this land. The scheme backfired and now, AOL is busy trying to digest Crow feathers. As far as we are Mr. Case & Co. are getting exactly what they deserve for having created such a logjam in their passionate lust for more users.

Back to the jist of what whas said in the editorial, in so many words, we offered the opinion that the major Telephone Companies and Service Providers should not be allowed to be both the Telephone Company providing the lines and access to the Internet Service Providers (large and small). The Telephone Companies are doing this and at the same time going into direct "dog eat dog" competition with the very same ISPs with cutthroat pricing. Then to top it all off.. As Illustrated lat week, there were a number of serious lags (holes in access - downtime) this past month. Oddly though, the ISP side of AT&T, MCI and Southern Bell experienced no difficulty at all.

When an ISP (not associated with or, part of the telephone company) wishes to expand, enhance or, otherwise speed-up their service, they must purchase additional bandwidth from the Phone Company. Ie., go from a T1 to a T2 or T3 or multiple thereof. The availability of these lines are now in "short supply" if available at all. Additionally, a typical T1 costs around three thousand dollars per month. Does the Phone Company "charge themselves"? Better yet, why is it the Phone Companies who are also offering Internet access etc., (ISP) are not experiencing band-width problems, slow-downs and busy signals?

Sure, the slowdowns are there but that's really indicative of the

amount of users accessing those networks and servers. Try the Internet during a regular business and/or school day. Then try it at between 7pm est and say, 8pm pst. You will see a vast difference in its performance. This is the indicator of heavy usage. When someone tries to call into an ISP.. and cannot get connected or gets continual busy signals that's bandwidth problems. There are only so many "lines" per T1 connection (24 channels-lines) once these are in use. its busy signal and no connection time.

Once an ISP's subscribers experience busy signals its time for another T1 or larger. Here is the real problem. the telephone companies have priced the T1 through T3 lines almost out of reach. Thus forcing ISPs to either remain small or go out of business. Add a telephone company that is also offering Internet Access and I believe we are staring Unfair Business Practices dead in the eye. I respectfully submit that if a Telephone Company is offering leased lines T1-T3 etc,. to one or more ISPs then that Telephone should NOT be permitted to offer services. A local ISP is at a decided disadvantage in this situation. Ultimately, it is the consumer who not only suffers but must "pay the price".

While it may have looked as though we were sympathetic to AOL's plight we are in fact, very sympathetic to all the privately owned ISPs as they are (literally) "over the barrel" with the phone companies. It is, in our opinion, a monopolistic gouge on the part of the phone companies.

Ralph..

Kids Computing Corner
Frank Sereno, Editor
fsereno@streport.com

The Kids' Computing Corner
Computer news and software reviews
from a parent's point of view

In the News

Free Software!

Hi there gang! This week's news is that The Kids' Computing Corner is holding another drawing to give away a program. We have a copy of the Macintosh version of Titanic: An Adventure Out of Time to give to a lucky winner via a random drawing. Entries will be accepted through 12:01am Thursday, February 20 and the winner will be announced in the February 21 edition of the Silicon Times Report. To enter, all you need to do is send an e-mail to me with the word Titanic in either the message body or the subject header. My e-mail addresses are fsereno@streport.com and fsereno@matrix.uti.com. I will notify the winner by e-mail and I will ship the prize as soon as I have the winner's address. The staff of STR Publishing is not eligible for this contest.

If you have any questions or comments, please pass them along. You can even send e-mail along to our youngest reviewer, my son Jeremy. I'm sure he would love to have some penpals. Just send them to one of my mailboxes and I'll make sure he gets them.

The 1997 Grolier Multimedia Encyclopedia
Windows CD-ROM
estimated price \$49.95

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Danbury CT 06816
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Program Requirements

OS:	Windows 3.1
CPU:	486DX/33
HD Space:	10 MB
Memory:	8 MB
Graphics:	640 x 480, 256 colors
CD-ROM:	Double-speed
Audio:	8-bit sound card
Optional:	printer

review by Jason Sereno (jason.sereno@mules-ear.com)

Grolier Interactive has recently released what they claim to be the most comprehensive encyclopedia on the market today. The 1997 Grolier Multimedia Encyclopedia is the program's title. President David Arganbright proclaims, "We were the first company to publish an electronic encyclopedia and we plan to continue to challenge ourselves to meet the needs and expectations of our consumers. We want to provide them with the most comprehensive and powerful reference tool available." I found The 1997 Grolier Multimedia Encyclopedia to be a very useful reference device.

The 1997 version offers varied color schemes and four new interfaces for the user to choose. These features allow the program to be used in homes, businesses, and libraries because of its flexible user interface. The different color schemes also make the program appeal to kids, and makes things more interesting unlike some learning or reference programs that are very dull or boring.

The 1997 version also includes a section entitled the Interactivities section. This section includes subjects on Animal Anatomy, Aviation, Famous Buildings/Landmarks, Habitats, Human Body, The Solar System, and Space Exploration. In these sections the user can view footage, rotate three dimensional objects, and explore different aspects of one of the nine sections.

The program also includes an Atlas that the publisher claims to be more comprehensive than any other multimedia encyclopedia on the market. It includes a timeline feature that has more extensive information on past and present events. The 1997 edition has more than 1200 maps. It includes historical, city and thematic maps. These themes feature languages, world religions, national parks, and time zones. The timeline feature tracks pivotal episodes in history. These are linked to photographs, videos, and narrations. The timeline has a year in review section that includes the highlights of 1996.

Along with The 1997 Grolier Multimedia Encyclopedia Grolier includes the Grolier Internet Index, a proprietary tool developed by Grolier. This allows users to link to specific, related Internet sites that have been hand-picked by Grolier's editors and educators. There will be approximately 1000 new pre-screened sites added each month. There will be up to 60 free hours of free Internet access provided by AT&T WorldNet Service and Netscape Navigator. Users will be able to access article updates as they become available. These updates will be available on the Grolier server and will not have to be downloaded. This will save you space on your hard drive, but it will start raising your online time.

The 1997 Grolier Multimedia Encyclopedia is a very useful reference device. The encyclopedia has your usual browse and search interface found in similar products. However, the extra interfaces along with the Internet option put this program at the top of the line. Grolier applies over 100 years' experience of compiling, analyzing, and organizing information to produce its flagship title. The 1997 Grolier Multimedia Encyclopedia features 50,000 entries, a redesigned and customizable interface, and a new atlas along with a timeline all on one CD-ROM. Whether you would prefer to read material or watch multimedia, this program should prove useful and educational to you and your family.

Scholastic's The Magic School Bus
Explores in the Age of Dinosaurs
CD-ROM for Windows 95
for ages 6 to 10
approximately \$30

Microsoft Corporation
One Microsoft Way
Redmond, WA 98502-6399
206-882-8080
<http://www.microsoft.com>

Program Requirements

OS:	Windows 95 or NT 3.51 or later
CPU:	486SX/33
HD Space:	6 MB
Memory:	8 MB
Graphics:	640 x 480, 256 colors

CD-ROM:	Double-speed
Audio:	8-bit sound card
Optional:	printer

review by Frank Sereno (fsereno@streport.com) with Jeremy

Let's start this article with my son Jeremy's view of the program. He's 8 years-old so he is right in the middle of the targeted age range for this product. I know that he has really enjoyed exploring this product and I am sure that he has much more to find hidden within The Magic School Bus Goes Exploring in the Age of Dinosaurs.

Jeremy writes: This program has a lot of fun games. In one game, you need to take pictures of three dinosaurs to win a prize. You have to solve a riddle to photograph the correct dinosaur. You travel to many different locations and they have more games. You have to solve puzzles to earn prizes. You can get Paleo cards in some games. I learned a lot about

dinosaurs from this program. I liked this game a lot.

And now back to our regularly scheduled review...

Hey! Let's climb aboard the Magic School Bus and have fun learning about dinosaurs. The bus can change into several different mechanized dinosaurs to travel back in time for the most exciting field trips you or your child will ever experience. Ms. Frizzle will lead you to seven different locales spread over three different time periods.

Learning and fun abound in this title. Like previous installments of the Magic School Bus series, you have to explore every scene to find hidden delights and learning activities. For example, in one scene you will see a dinosaur bone. Click on it and you will play a game assembling dinosaur skeletons. In another scene, you can click on a dinosaur footprint to begin a picture puzzle activity. While traveling in the dinosaur lands, click on all the animals to learn a bit about them. The program contains many humorous touches. Be sure to click on the intercom system on the bus to hear the funny dinosaur songs!

Jeremy's favorite activity was finding the missing dinosaurs in Ms. Frizzle's photo albums. The program gives you two hints about the animal's physical characteristic and then it tells you the animal's location for a third clue. Then you travel to the location, figure out which dinosaur is the target and take its picture. When you find three missing dinosaurs, you win a prize of a dinosaur mask that you can print out. These are very cool with younger children.

While you're riding the bus, don't forget to check out the Back Bus Dinotorium. Just click on the bus's rearview mirror to find more fun activities. The dinosaur reports by Ms. Frizzle's class are very interesting and extremely informative, but if you want to relax and laugh you can click on "the best of the nest" for some prehistoric standup comics. There are other activities available but I'll leave those for your child to discover.

This is really an entertaining program. It features a great interface that includes spoken help. The program has a closed caption option for those with hearing impairments but it will also improve reading skills in all children. The animations are a bit choppy, but my kids didn't seem to mind. The colorful graphics certainly have appeal. The program also features some great tunes, sharp special effects and wonderful voice characterizations. MSB Dinos will provide hours of entertainment and learning fun for your kids. It's backed by Microsoft's 30-Day moneyback guarantee. It is currently being offered with a rebate offer if you buy two MSB titles before December 31, 1997. Couple those factors with its reasonable price and this is one program that is hard to pass by. If your kids are interested in dinosaurs, pick up a copy of The Magic School Bus Goes Exploring in the Age of Dinosaurs today!

Compare and Contrast of Dinosaur Programs

Over the past few weeks, I have reviewed three programs about dinosaurs. First was Message in a Fossil from Brighter Child. It is a multimedia simulation of life as a paleontologist. The program's user will get a real feel for the work at a fossil dig. This is a great program for kids that

are inquisitive and enjoy science. It contains a lot of information about dinosaurs and other ancient animals. This is an excellent program for kids 8 to 12, but I think many adults will find it fascinating as well. At least I know I did!

The second title was Dinosaur Explorers from N-TK's Memorex software line. This program is best for younger children. The graphics are very cartoonish and simple. Most activities seemed geared towards the younger set too. This is not to say older children cannot learn from it, but in my opinion this program is best for children ages 4 to 8. It's a lot of fun and a great introduction to dinosaurs and science.

Finally, we have The Magic School Bus Goes Exploring in the Age of Dinosaurs from Microsoft. This title is recommended by the publisher for children ages 6 to 10. I think children older than 10 will enjoy it too, but they will probably outgrow it quickly. Then they will need a more in-depth reference program such as Microsoft Dinosaurs. With its fifteen games and numerous multimedia reports, MSB Dinos provides an excellent combination of fun and learning.

All three titles are fun and educational. My suggestion is that if your kids are under six, start them out with Dinosaur Explorers, then move up to MSB Dinos and then consider Message in a Fossil as they grow older. If your child is 6 or older, MSB Dinos is best suited for him. If he is 10 or older or he is of a very serious nature, Message in a Fossil is your best bet. When choosing software, keep in mind your child's age and interest. When in doubt, always purchase products that are backed by money-back guarantees.

Harley Hahn's Internet & Web Yellow Pages (1997 Edition)
book and CD-ROM
\$29.99
Osborne/McGraw-Hill
<http://www.osborne.com>

From agriculture to zoology, Harley Hahn covers the gamut of subject matter and interests available on the Internet. This book and CD-ROM combo contains the URL's from thousands of WEB sites, the names of Usenet newsgroups and mailing lists, FAQs and more.

More than 900 pages of information are carefully indexed and organized for easy data retrieval. But the book is more than a collection of eclectic Internet sites. It is a depository for the amusing wit and whimsy of Harley Hahn. His humorous and thought-provoking prose and descriptive passages make for very enjoyable reading.

The included CD-ROM features a searchable, online version of the book. You can read it just like the paper version or you can use the search engine to find a topic of interest. You can click on any URL's go directly to those sites via your browser. Additionally, the CD-ROM provides free Internet software for AT&T's WorldNet Service.

This book and software are suitable for users of all level of experience. The book refers to many to numerous sites that are educational and entertaining for kids as well as adults. Please note that Mr. Hahn does list some adults only sites. As far as I could tell, the included browser software did not include any of the available access-limitation software to shield your children from mature content. If you are looking for the

ultimate guide to Internet sources, Harley Hahn's Internet & Web Yellow
Pages 1997 Edition is the book (and CD-ROM) for you!

Special Notice!! STR Infofile File format for Articles

File Format for STReport

All articles submitted to STReport for publication must be sent in the following format. Please use the format requested. Any files received that do not conform will not be used. The article must be in an importable word processor format for Word 7.0.. The margins are .05" left and 1.0" Monospaced fonts are not to be used. Please use proportional fonting only and at eleven points.

- '• No Indenting on any paragraphs!!
- '• No Indenting of any lines or "special gimmickery"
- '• No underlining!
- '• Columns shall be achieved through the use of tabs only. Or, columns in Word format. Do NOT use the space bar.
- '• No ASCII "ART"!!
- '• There is no limits as to size, articles may be split into two if lengthy
- '• Actual Artwork should be in GIF, PCX, JPG, TIF, BMP, WMF file formats
- '• Artwork (pictures, graphs, charts, etc.) should be sent along with the article separately
- '• Please use a single font only in an article. TTF CG Times 12pt. is preferred. (VERY Strong Hint)

If there are any questions please use either E-Mail or call. On another note. the ASCII version of STReport is fast approaching the "end of the line" As the major Online Services move away from ASCII.. So shall STReport. All in the name of progress and improved readability. The amount of reader mail expressing a preference for our Adobe PDF enhanced issue is running approximately 15 to 1 over the ASCII edition. Besides, STReport will not be caught in the old, worn out "downward compatibility dodge" we must move forward. However, if the ASCII readership remains as high, rest assured. ASCII will stay. Right now, since STReport is offered on a number of closed major corporate networks as "required" Monday Morning reading.. Our ascii readers have nothing to worry themselves about.

Many grateful thanks in advance for your enthusiastic co-operation and input.

Ralph F. Mariano, Editor
rmariano@streport.com
STReport International Online Magazine

Gaming Hotwire STR Feature - The World of Contemporary Gaming

Diablo STR Review And you thought DM, DM2 and Doom were HOT?

DIABLO

By Ralph F. Mariano

Hold onto your socks! Diablo is the real thing! From the very moment I "fooled around" with the DEMO. (brought to my attention by Ron Satchwill) I was literally "Spellbound". I loved the FTL Dungeon Master series of years gone by and the ID Soft's repertoire of Doom etc.. But Diablo has gotten my attention. In all honesty, I've got to tell you this ..it crossed my mind sublimely as I was making my way through level 5 of Diablo, in the "normal" mode using a Sorcerer, that I was (all the time) comparing this new game with the others that had impressed me over the years. The bottom line is quite clear.

Diablo has been awarded the coveted STReport Editor's Choice for Excellence in programming, storyline, artwork, soundwork, music and animation. Watch the STReport WebSite for Diablo's installation as Editor's Choice of Game of the Year. While Diablo may not be for everyone, its certainly the best candidate for crowd pleaser in gaming for 1996-1997. I would not be the least bit surprised to see the game console manufacturers making a move to get this game into say. the Sony Playstation.

Introduction to Diablo

For those who have not heard about Diablo. Here's a mini Diablo FAQ.

What kind of game is it?

Diablo is an unconventional RPG, focusing primarily on real time action. Diablo is definitely not akin to the Final Fantasy/Daggerfall/Betrayal at Krondor type of RPG. Though said not to be an RPG by purists, Diablo is what an RPG was before one had to memorize 100's of obscure rules, trivial classes and other things. Diablo is a pure RPG, as Role Playing originally was; getting together with a bunch of friends to hack and slash your way through the dungeon, and having a damn good time doing it. This is not to say that Diablo is merely a click-fest, Diablo also involves a lot of strategy, you cannot just blindly run into a room full of Blood Knights and expect to click your way through it.

What's special about Diablo?

Diablo has many different things going for it, this is why it was easily the most anticipated game of 1996. Diablo's graphics are stunning, clear and crisp from an overhead 3/4 perspective, much like Crusader. Advanced lighting effects, eerie ambient sound effects, and some of the most moody music you'll ever hear all contribute to an immersive experience never before experienced on a PC. All of the programming itself is cutting edge, and this is very apparent. Tired of stupid mindless repetitive enemies? Then Diablo is the game for you. These enemies are as close to being alive as anything else ever cooked up in some programmers lab. Not only do they think of themselves as individuals, among many of the creatures, especially of the lower regions of the dungeon, a group mind/pack mentality can be seen at work. You think you're finally getting

a breather, only got one enemy left, when he retreats. Fine you think, and you follow with your sword drawn, when much to your surprise, a hoard of his fellow Vortex Lords pours out from around the corner, and you watch in dismay as you desperately try to extricate yourself from the mass of demons. The fun doesn't stop there either, Diablo contains every multi-player option under the sun, short of hot seat play.

Story

The kingdom of Khandaras has fallen into chaos. An unknown force of evil has swept across the land, plunging it into civil war and terrorizing the populace. A mad king, his missing son, and a mysterious Archbishop are all pieces to the puzzle that faces you. You have journeyed to the source of the evil, the town of Tristram, now inhabited by only a handful of survivors. The cathedral there is built over the ruins of an ancient monastery, and now eerie lights and sounds are heard echoing through its abandoned halls. Perhaps the answer lies within the remains of a forgotten past.

Classes

Diablo offers three classes of characters to choose from, and unlike most, there actually are noticeable, non-cosmetic differences between the characters available. There is a Warrior, for those who favor melee combat and are not that excited by spells should use. There is a Rogue who is a combination of the Warrior and the Sorcerer, able to use both spells and weapons decently. She is the undisputed master of the bow, in addition she can see farther than the other characters as well as possessing a disarm trap skill. There is of course, a Sorcerer.. who while being the absolute lord of magic, is not very skilled with weapons, which can make this choice difficult for newbie players. However, in the hands of a skilled player, a high level Sorcerer can be an utterly devastating force. As an aside, the sex of the characters is set at the time of this writing, with the Warrior and Sorcerer being male, and the Rogue female. It also should be noted that while the classes are defining, they are not the final word, there is nothing stopping a Sorcerer cracking a few skulls with his mace or a warrior toasting some baddies with a few rounds of chain lightning. The "classes" are truly not classes in the traditional sense, they are more of an archetype.

Interface

As is the trend in adventure games these days, Diablo uses a three-quarters isometric view. This type of view has been used recently in games such as Druid, Relentless, and Ultima. The graphics are all 640x480 Super-VGA and 3-D rendered, heroes, monsters, and walls alike, and the view appears much like a medieval Crusader: No Remorse. The World View of your surroundings takes up a little over 2/3 of the screen, from the top down. Here you see your hero in the center, and you can zoom in or out to enlarge or shrink your surroundings. The bottom portion is the Status and Options area, where you have buttons to access your inventory (which then temporarily unfolds over half of your World View), spell book, disk options, and the like. Also included here is a status line, which updates things such as spells cast or objects acquired, and two globes, one red, one blue. These two globes represent your health and mana, respectively. All interaction, excluding programmable macros, is done through the use of the mouse, including battle.

Character Appearance

The characters each change appearance depending what they're using. If you equip your warrior with field plate, it looks different than when he is wearing scale, which is different from leather. Their appearance also changes according to shields, helmets and weapons. The heroes each possess

several thousand frames of animation giving them a fluid motion, which looks truly realistic.

Monster Appearance

There are over 200 monsters in Diablo, and all have an incredibly fluid motion, and all are very distinctive. Zombies shamble, skeletons rattle, acid beasts spit, fallen ones run away if you kill their fellows. They also all act different. The various clans of goatmen are cowardly, and will run when attacked, however if one counts on the blood knights behaving the same way, one shall most likely have an untimely demise.

Battle

Battle is the most important of Diablo, and is hence the most varied. One cannot use the same strategies for all situations. Combat is a very dynamic, fluid process, and varies wildly depending on the characters and monsters involved.

Combat is accomplished completely through use of the mouse, with 4 macros selecting spells (the rest from the menu) a left click swings the equipped weapon while a right click will cast the selected spell. Weapon choice can also have an effect on combat, and not just due to damage range. While wielding the mighty halberd it is true one is more powerful, however one is also slower, and a faster opponent with a dagger or a sword may take advantage of this with hit and run tactics, skipping in and out of range of the weapon.

Spells also "feel" different. The flash spell was designed to be used when surrounded, and fires extremely fast. The fireball, on the other hand takes a moment to cast, and is best used from a distance. Monsters also can be resistant to certain spells and weapons. Thus, one cannot master an ultimate spell to destroy all monsters, or use the super sword on all. The undead should be battled with blunt weapons, while demons seem to be most susceptible to a sharp blade.

Levels

Levels in Diablo are randomly generated, for best re-playability. However, unlike others with a random map generator, there are no bugs in these levels. It is an example of remarkable programming, but every single level is always different, and there are never any rooms with without doors.

Classics & Entertainment Section

Editor Dana P. Jacobson

dpj@streport.com

From the Atari Editor's Desk

"Saying it like it is!"

Okay, I have to admit that I've been spending too much time playing with "HomePage Penguin", a web page designer for Atari computers. I've been working to set up a page for my user group (SSAG) and BBS (Toad Hall), along with my wife's sidelines, Imzadi International (Star Trek) fanclub and SciFi Zone (Star Trek Collectibles).

It's been fun, and a little frustrating to get these pages linked correctly - especially when I had various renditions of each page and I was linking the pages to the wrong files! But in the end, I did manage to come

up with some pages that, although still a little rough-edged, are satisfying. I'll be updating them and adding to them.

While on the subject, if you have a user group or BBS that supports Atari users, let me know. As I mentioned last week, I'd like to put together and maintain an active list containing information regarding both. Also, if your group or BBS has a web page, let me know the web address so I can provide a link to it/them from my pages.

The address for the SSAG and Toad Hall Web pages is:
<http://people.delphi.com/dpj> I'll likely put identical pages up on CompuServe, as well. Both online services offer members an amount of space to place pages - a nice benefit. Hope to see you drop by - please send your comments and suggestions!

Until next time...

Newsbytes NewsReel - 12 Years Ago This Week

MINNEAPOLIS, MINNESOTA, U.S.A., 1997 JAN 29 (Newsbytes) -- By Nick Gorski. Twelve years ago these Newsbytes stories were filed: AppleTalk; MacCharlie; and Alsop's Fables. These stories were taken from the extensive archives at the Newsbytes Website at <http://www.newsbytes.com>

AppleTalk

While some are laughing at the slow and primitive nature of Apple's new local area network product, they can't laugh at the genius behind it. First, it's got to be the simplest network to set up, just connect a cable to a cable, and secondly, several third-party developers are engineering software and hardware to enable the Mac Office to link to other major networks. 3Com of Mountain View, California, for instance, is putting the finishing touches on a system that links AppleTalk to Ethernet. But that file server -- the unit with 20-40 megabytes (MB) of memory and the central storage system for a large Apple network -- won't come until the fall of 1985. That's bad news because it's considered a critical part of the supported network. In the meantime, users who demand Apple products will have to be content with the 10MB Mac XL (formerly Lisa 2/10). Meanwhile, Dartmouth College in Hanover, New Hampshire, has been using AppleTalk to link 1,200 Macintosh computers to its VAX-11 series minicomputers. The college designed its own "Kiewit Network" to communicate with the mainframes. The system reportedly works very well.

MacCharlie

A company called Dayna Communications has a \$985 mini-IBM PC which will enable the Macintosh to run IBM programs. "MacCharlie" consists of a 5.25-inch disk drive, a keyboard for the Mac that conforms to the keyboard of the IBM PC, and an IBM PC central processing unit. The company is so convinced of its potential success in integrating Mac and PC programs that it's planning to produce 70,000 units this year.

Alsop's Fables

Stewart Alsop, editor of the new PC Letter, just published his first edition. Items included cover the PC2, a monthly "Vaporlist" (devoted to non-existent "announced" products), and Apple's expected announcements.

Alsop, former publisher of InfoWorld also brings forth his predictions for the home hardware market. He believes Atari's 65 and 130 XE computers (those 32-bit vaporware machines) will be the "best sellers in a flat market....(and will be the) best seller (in Christmas 1985). "...all 8-bit computers will be declining and will be heavily discounted computers." Quite interesting reading.

[Editor's note: A BBS shutting down is a common occurrence - it probably happens somewhere every day. But, when you know the folks at these boards, and have been communicating with them for years, it hits home hard when you learn of one "passing". This is the case of the following message I found on the UseNet earlier in the week. I "networked" with Andy Curtis' Ad.Lib BBS a few years ago when MNET (MichTron NETwork) was flourishing. It was fun communicating with the likes of Andy and Frank via messages. The MNET died out, but the messages found other routes somehow. We were friends although we have never met. If Ad.Lib does indeed close its doors, it will be a loss for the BBS scene in the U.K. I thought it appropriate to include the following message of nostalgia.]

Ad.Lib BBS Is Closing

Frank Charlton <frank@tachyon.co.uk>

The Ad.Lib BBS is closing...

It is with deep regret that we make this announcement - the Ad.Lib BBS is closing its doors for the final time. After a long and prestigious five year history as a major Atari BBS, Ad.Lib will be powering down for the final time at 11:59 p.m. on February 28th, 1997. There now follows a brief history of the board, detailing some of the major landmarks of the last few years. If you don't want to read the long message, please accept our heartfelt thanks if you ever called the Ad.Lib BBS.

We don't really want to close, but it seems that Ad.Lib has reached the end of its natural life. It was not an easy decision, but Frank and Andy (The SysOps) decided that they could not, any longer, commit the time and energy to give the BBS the care it so richly deserves.

Now, those of you who are interested, read on...

Ad.Lib began as the brainchild of Andy Curtis many years ago, when he was first bitten by the comms bug after connecting to the old Bath BBS, a MichTron system for Atari users. He acquired a copy of the STarnet BBS software, and armed with a single ST and old 300 baud modem (!), he set up a simple test system. Andy placed an ad in the Fidonet Atari area on a local PC BBS, looking for test callers. Another Atari user recently bitten by the comms bug - Frank Charlton - decided to call. Andy cocked up that first time, though - he left his answering machine on, and it picked up the calls before the BBS did. Frank left a message, Andy got back in touch, and the Ad.Lib team was born...

The BBS graduated to an Amstrad 2400 modem before it actually went on-line for the first time, with the MichTron BBS software. Back then, the BBS ran MichTron from a dual-floppy setup. Different files were offered using a 'Request Disk' system - a different floppy was on-line every night, with different downloads. It all sounds rather arcane in these days of superfast modems and vast hard drives, but storage space was ridiculously expensive back in those days! From its early beginnings as a weekend only system, the BBS grew to a nightly 8pm-9am system, still running from a large RAM disk

and floppies.

Andy returned from an Atari show in London with a shiny new 50MB hard drive from Gasteiner, which cost him a small fortune. He devoted his proud new purchase to the burgeoning BBS, and Ad.Lib finally offered a large selection of files. With the acquisition of a dedicated phone line, Ad.Lib became a full 24-hour BBS. Back then, MichTron was still a popular BBS system, even though it showed its age in some areas. (Wot, n Z-Modem?) With the help of ace programmer Dave Meaker, Ad.Lib pushed the boundaries of MichTron as far as possible. Ad.Lib even joined the fledgling MNet system, a BBS network similar to NeST, linking MichTron boards as far away as the USA and the Netherlands (Hi Dana and Werner!). A lot of the users from this MichTron period became firm friends of Andy and Frank - in particular, ST FORMAT's Clive Parker appeared for the first time, going on to become a regular uploader to both Atari and Star Trek file areas. Without Ad.Lib to introduce them to Clive, neither Andy or Frank would have gone on to write for a living - for ST FORMAT and beyond. (Hi Clive, please make cheques payable to "Ad.Lib Media".) Eventually though, the BBS needed to evolve. With the non-appearance of MichTron 3, Andy and Frank decided to jump ship. Andy ordered a copy of the brand new and very powerful RATSsoft/ST BBS software from the USA. Mark Matts, SysOp of the old System ST BBS popped up on the train from Nottingham, and spent a long day with Andy and Frank, installing and configuring the new BBS. Within a day or two, the new Ad.Lib was born, using the relatively new 14,400 modem technology.

Gradually, the BBS got bigger and bigger, thanks partly to a link-up with ST Format magazine which it supported right up until the magazines demise in December 1996. With RATSsoft supporting Fido-style networking, Ad.Lib linked into the NeST, Atarinet and Fidonet networks to exchange mail across the globe. Dave Meaker and Martin Stacey were by now running the Holodeck BBS, and were fiddling with their own network, Fishnet - Ad.Lib joined in, too.

Slowly but surely, the BBS file bases grew. Andy invested in more hard drive mechanisms, all built into a huge Heath Robinson style case built from an old desktop PC case Frank had salvaged. At this peak, the BBS was almost constantly engaged, and it became something of comms 'trophy' to say you'd connected to Ad.Lib without hearing the engaged tone! During 1994 and 1995 there were over 13,000 calls per yer. Andy was concerned that a lot of users were becoming frustrated at not being able to connect, and the fledgling Ad.Lib 2 was born.

Ad.Lib 2 was a second ST system with its own phone line and modem. By now, both boards progressed to the new 28,800 modems which had just become available, Andy splashed out on a new Optima 288 from Hayes at a large price we'd rather not remember! Even though very few users had these modems - it was probably only Frank who did, if truth be told, Ad.Lib became an early adopter of this now standard speed. Around this time, Mark Matts closed System ST for the last time, and Ad.Lib 2 actually ran from the original System ST hard drives, which Andy bought from Mark. Rather than run a completely separate second BBS, Andy and Frank experimented with various networking options. MIDI networking proved too slow, and the software available at the time wasn't particularly good. After a while, Andy picked up a pair of cartridge port networking devices, which meant Ad.Lib could share data between the 2 systems. Sadly, it proved to be a nightmare for Andy and Frank to keep this system running, and to keep the two machines synchronized. After a while, Ad.Lib 2 was slowly phased out.

As Frank became Reviews Editor then Technical Editor at STF, work pressures

gradually took him away from the BBS. In stepped Steve Dent, a genial Clevelander, to take up Co-SysOp duties. Andy and Steve slaved away at keeping the BBS up to date, despite on particularly nasty hard drive crash when a vast proportion of the file bases were irretrievably lost. At this point, the Ad.Lib users showed how loyal they were - as well as a massive amount of uploading, users sent in boxes of disks stuffed with files they'd originally downloaded from Ad.Lib. At the time, Andy was amazed how the regular crowd rallied round to rebuild Ad.Lib, rather than defecting to another BBS.

Later that year, Andy and Steve hooked up a couple of CD-ROM drives to Ad.Lib, with the Crawly Crypt 1 and 2 CDs being provided by 16/32 Systems along with a copy of Mega Archive 1 from System Solutions. By mid-1996, ST FORMAT wasn't a healthy magazine, and eventually closed down. With more time on his hands, Frank popped back again to his original comms home. Steve stayed on too, bringing the Ad.Lib team up to three.

By October, it became obvious that Andy was about to move house very soon. It was to be a complex enough move to begin with, and Andy was unsure about how to proceed with the BBS. Rather than keep it offline for ages, it was decided that the whole kit and kaboodle would be relocated to Frank's house. Preparations were made, and the new number was advertised across the networks. Finally, on September 8th, Ad.Lib was sparked back into life some 13 miles across the North-East, after only a day offline. Andy's original ST was put into semi-retirement, and Frank's Falcon became the new host for the BBS. Despite some worrying hiccups like another HD crash - we had a backup of the system burned onto CD-ROM this time - Ad.Lib continued.

As 1996 ended, it became painfully obvious that things just weren't the same. Neither Frank nor Andy had anywhere near as much time as is really needed to run a 24-hour dedicated BBS, and calls were gradually beginning to dwindle as long-time BBS users were bitten by the Internet bug.

A look through Ad.Lib's userlog from the past few years has shown some surprising things. Very few of our users ever came from the North-East area of England - almost every user was calling at the National rate. Over the years, a lot of International users stuck with us. Some, like Lasse Eldrup, popped up at regular intervals, and uploaded more files than local users! Others like Dale Wright made a telephonic journey of over 300 miles every day to collect and send mail, despite having Atari boards closer to home. We thank them for sticking by us over the years, just as much as we thank everyone who ever added the Ad.Lib number to their autodialer. Without the users, a BBS is nothing. Without loyal and caring users, a BBS has no life. Thankfully, we've had both in droves, and we've loved every minute of it.

It is impossible to mention every valued user by name, there were so many, but there has to be space to mention the incredible Jessica Long. We really don't know who she is, but she called the BBS faithfully over 3 years, almost every single night! Her fast wit and charming message style were sorely missed when she left the BBS scene in 1995. Whoever and wherever you are, Jessica, thanks!

But, in the words of Star Trek - All Good Things must come to an end. For the final month of Ad.Lib's life, all restrictions have been lifted. If you've never logged on to the BBS before, now is your final chance. You don't have to wait for verification any more, and you can grab files from the very first minute you call. All download ratios have been lifted, and you can happily trough the file bases as much as you like. Still, the Atari BBS scene lives on! We warmly invite you to call 42 BBS and join the

growing numbers using it to exchange messages and files. We must be grateful to all Atari BBS SysOps for their continued dedication to the market, along with the hard work of guys such as Daron Brewood. Finally, to anyone who ever called Ad.Lib - if you enjoyed the BBS, then please do let us know. If you have any tales to tell of your early Ad.Lib experiences, please tell us - we'd love to create a memorial to the BBS, probably in the form of a website. Both of us will still be knocking about - we both turn up on the IRC channel #atari with alarming regularity - and we don't want to lose touch. Thanks from both Andy and Frank for all those fantastic years of fun, files and friendship...

So long, and thanks for all the sausages.

Andy Curtis <andy@adlib.co.uk>

Frank Charlton <frank@tachyon.co.uk>

Web Users Can Now Search Everywhere On The Internet...

SAN DIEGO, Jan. 30 /PRNewswire/ -- Filez - <http://www.filez.com> has unveiled the largest software search engine on the World Wide Web and promises to simplify the hunt for software on the Internet.

Filez is the first commercial search engine to focus on ftp (software) sites rather than WWW pages. "One of the first things new users on the net want to do is find software and games and until now there's been few choices for those users," says company founder, Michael Robertson. While most search engines concentrate on WWW pages, Filez indexes 1000s of software sites and amasses the largest database of files n the Internet.

A state of the art search system was implemented which permits users to search through a list of over 75 million files for specific titles and types of files from worldwide sources in just seconds. From one freely accessible web form, searches can be performed for software, updates, games, graphics, sounds, movies, midi files, and more. Category headings make it easy for Windows, Macintosh, OS/2, Atari, Amiga and other computer platforms to select only titles applicable to their needs.

Thousands of freeware, shareware and commercial servers are cataloged on a regular basis by Filez. Users can search all of those servers or select only servers with certain domain endings such as sites geographically located close to them. "What was once an all-day job guessing addresses, hop-scotching to different sites, and clicking through directories now takes literally seconds," says beta tester Jeff Winkler.

Besides searching, users can also peruse the holdings of popular ftp sites at Filez. This allows net surfers to check out notoriously busy sites that typically deny access because of limitations on the number of users or simply do not offer searching capabilities. Filez also lets users search particular corporate sites worldwide for software such as Apple.

Negotiations are underway with search and content partners to bring the software search capabilities of Filez to a widespread audience through co-branded web pages, licensed content, and ad revenue sharing. The Filez service can be located at: <http://www.filez.com> and can be accessed from any forms capable World Wide Web browser.

Filez is located at P.O. Box 910091, San Diego, CA 92191-0091. Telephone: 619-581-1931, or E-mail salesfilez.com.

Gaming Section

Cyber Strike! Alps Pad Award!
MDK! PSX Holiday Sales!
And More!

From the Editor's Controller - Playin' it like it is!

I don't have much to say this week. All of the news that I have is related to articles I've found in my travels this past week. Nothing Jaguar-related (surprised?). So, let's get to the various news items and interesting articles and we'll hope to have more of an assortment next week (including Jaguar news).

Until next time...

Industry News STR Game Console NewsFile - The Latest Gaming News!

FBI Raids BBSs In Software Piracy Crackdown

SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA, U.S.A., 1997 JAN 28 (Newsbytes) -- By Bill Pietrucha. Early this afternoon, the US Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) staged a coordinated series of raids nationwide following an eight month undercover investigation into software piracy. The computer software piracy investigation, code named "Cyber Strike," was initiated and supervised by the FBI's International Computer Crime Squad based here.

According to FBI spokespersons, Cyber Strike is a "continuing investigation and additional searches are anticipated in the near future." The FBI said the investigation concerns the alleged efforts of individuals and groups who have banded together to pass protected, restricted and/or copyrighted information and commercial copyrighted software through the use of businesses and computer Bulletin Board Services (BBSs), Internet File Transfer Protocol (FTP) sites, and Internet Relay Chat (IRC) channels.

The material seized as specified in the warrants included computer hardware, documents and records, and included some of the most popular program software commercially available, such as utilities, graphics, networking programs, operating systems, and games. According to the FBI, the victimized manufacturers of copyrighted products and systems include Sega of America Inc.; Sony Computer Entertainment; Autodesk Corp.; Microsoft Corp.; Adobe Systems Inc.; Intuit Corp.; Symantec Corp.; Novell Inc.; and Nintendo of America Inc.

The FBI also said that the alleged perpetrators are involved in a variety of additional criminal activities, including theft of telephone services, distribution and use of stolen credit card and calling card numbers, spreading destructive programs such as computer viruses, intrusions into various types of computer systems and networks, and the theft of corporate proprietary information. Search warrants and/or simultaneous interviews are being conducted at residences and businesses in Atlanta, Georgia; Columbus, Ohio; Miami, Florida; Oklahoma City, Oklahoma; Des Moines, Iowa; Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania; and San Leandro and Cedar Ridge, California.

Following the announcement of the raids, the Software Publishers Association (SPA) and its 1200 member companies congratulated the FBI on its execution of the search warrants. "Operation Cyber Strike is a clear and decisive indication by the FBI and its San Francisco-based International Computer Crime Squad that illegal duplication and distribution of computer software will not be tolerated by the Federal government and individuals or groups engaged in pirating software are subject to the full force of the law," the SPA said.

"SPA has cooperated with the FBI in bringing previous actions against software pirates, particularly in the area of Bulletin Board Services, and fully supports the FBI in today's actions and ongoing efforts to eliminate software piracy throughout the United States," SPA officials said. "We welcome this initiative by the FBI and will continue to offer any assistance the FBI may need, including the SPA database of over 1600 alleged pirate bulletin boards, to see this investigation successfully concluded."

Sega of America, which also has been cooperating with the FBI in the investigation, also applauded the raids. "Sega aggressively protects its properties and products," Shoichiro Irimajiri, chairman and chief executive officer (CEO), Sega of America, said. "We are especially pleased that the FBI has taken this industry-wide situation so seriously and dedicated a special team to shutting down this illegal activity." The FBI said that anyone having relevant, credible information that may assist the investigation is requested to contact the FBI Computer Crime quad in San Francisco, at 415-553-7400.

SEGA Applauds FBI "Cyber Strike"

REDWOOD CITY, CALIF. (Jan. 28) BUSINESS WIRE -Jan. 28, 1997--Sega of America Inc. applauds the Federal Bureau of Investigation's (FBI) efforts to stop the illegal duplication and distribution of software on internet bulletin board services nationwide, as announced today by the FBI's International Computer Crime Squad based in San Francisco. Sega has been cooperating with the FBI in the investigation, code named "Cyber Strike," since last spring.

"Sega aggressively protects its properties and products," Shoichiro Irimajiri, chairman and CEO, Sega of America, said. "We are especially pleased that the FBI has taken this industry-wide situation so seriously and dedicated a special team to shutting down this illegal activity."

Alps Interactive Gamepad Voted Best Overall Controller

SAN JOSE, CALIF. (Jan. 29) BUSINESS WIRE -Jan. 29, 1997--Alps Electric (USA), Inc. today announced that Video Game Advisor magazine, a trade publication written for retail buyers, selected the new Alps Interactive PS Gamepad as the "1996 Best Overall Controller." The Alps gamepad was selected as the best among all the contenders on both console and PC platforms, including those from established leaders in gaming peripherals.

The year-end issue of the magazine cited the Alps Interactive Gamepad as "one that every sell through gaming and toy store should have." The product review also points out that "once you start playing ... you forget you're even holding a controller," and the fact that the gamepad is designed by the gaming experts is "undeniably true once you get it in your hands." The bottom line of the product review states, "Actual use and word of mouth will sell these more than anything, so don't be afraid to push: it will only multiply your profits long term."

The Gamepad

The Alps Interactive Gamepad for the PlayStation(TM) game console features the familiar 14-button layout, and an ultra-smooth direction pad. It is the first PS gamepad with rubber grips, which reduces the "hand salsa," and gives players the control required to compete in today's competitive gaming environments. The naturally curved design and enhanced feel is comfortable and well suited for hands of all sizes. The PS gamepad comes in two colors -- high-tech blue and limited edition radical red.

"Alps consulted with New York based Smart Design, and designers, producers, testers, editors, and gamers to come up with our award-winning design," said Ke Kajikawa, product manager for Alps Interactive. "This award echoes early industry opinion that this controller is the 'Porsche' of controllers -- sexy, fast, and high quality." The Alps Interactive Gamepad is available through national retailers and distributors. The estimated street price is \$39.95. For more information visit our website at www.interactive.alps.com, or contact Alps at 800/825-2577.

SALES RESULTS SUBSTANTIATE FACT THAT PLAYSTATION IS "NEXT GENERATION" SYSTEM OF CHOICE

Comprehensive Holiday Sales Data Confirms PlayStation Was The Overwhelming Sales Success of 1996

FOSTER CITY, January 29, 1997 - Sony Computer Entertainment America Inc. announced today that after completing a comprehensive analysis of its year end sales data, the PlayStation(tm) brand was the undisputed "next generation" video game sales leader. Accordingly, the company announced the following results:

From September 29 - December 31, 1996 (the same three month period as the North American launch of the Nintendo(r) 64), Sony Computer Entertainment America sold-through 1.46 million PlayStation game consoles.

- ' • From September 29 - December 31, 1996, 6.36 million pieces of PlayStation software were sold.
- ' • From September 29 - December 31, 1996, North American sales for PlayStation brand products were more than \$650 million.
- ' • As of January 13, 1997, the U.S. installed base of PlayStation game consoles has grown to 3.2 million.
- ' • For the month of December 1996 only, North American sales were comprised of nearly 900,000 PlayStation game consoles, 4 million pieces
- ' • of PlayStation software and 1.8 million peripherals, for cumulative North American PlayStation brand sales of \$405 million, or more than \$13 million per day.

"According to industry information we've seen, our sales figures make us the far-away leader in the next generation video game market," said Kaz Hirai, chief operating officer, Sony Computer Entertainment America. "While we knew that PlayStation sales were phenomenal, we wanted to first collect all of the data from our retail partners before making any premature announcements. We can now say with great confidence -- even though we were supply constrained throughout the holiday season -- that we are the 'next generation' video game leader." Visit us on the Web at <http://www.sony.com>

GT Interactive Acquires One Stop Direct, Ltd

NEW YORK (Jan. 28) BUSINESS WIRE -Jan. 28, 1997-- Move Strongly Positions Company In European Value Software Market Expanding its foothold in the global value-priced software market, GT Interactive Software Corp. (NASDAQ: GTIS) has acquired leading European value software publisher One Stop Direct Ltd. The acquisition provides GT Interactive with a direct presence in the expanding European value software market while boosting its global value software publishing business. Financial terms of the agreement were not disclosed.

"By establishing direct value publishing operations in Europe we are extending the strength of our business model throughout the world," said Ron Chaimowitz, president and chief executive officer of GT Interactive. "With the acquisition of One Stop we gain the ability to offer software titles at varying price points not only in North America, but also to the European market."

"We are pleased to continue the expansion of our European presence through the acquisition of One Stop, a leader in value publishing," said Harry Rubin, Executive Vice President, General Manager, International Division and Business Affairs. "With One Stop as an integral part of our overseas operations we believe we further our position to take advantage of the opportunities in this greatly expanding marketplace."

Based in Wimbledon, One Stop's operations will remain intact and the company becomes a wholly owned GT Interactive subsidiary. Recently GT Interactive strengthened and expanded its European presence through the acquisition of Warner Interactive, establishing direct operations in France and Germany under GT Interactive Ltd., the company's London-based subsidiary. In addition to One Stop in Europe, GT Interactive is a leading value priced publisher of software under the Slash and WizardWorks brands in North America. As a result of its acquisition of One Stop, all GT Interactive value software will be distributed to the European market through the new subsidiary.

Playmates Interactive Entertainment to Preview MDK

COSTA MESA, CALIF. (Jan. 30) BUSINESS WIRE -Jan. 30, 1997-- First look at genre-busting tittlethrough interactive demo, sweepstakes on Internet's No. 1 computer games site

Already proving itself to be one of the most highly anticipated titles of the year, the buzz surrounding Playmates Interactive Entertainment's "MDK" will reach a crescendo Feb. 1 to 14, when consumers can download an interactive demo of the game on the Internet's No. 1 games site, Happy Puppy (happypuppy.com), and enter a special "MDK" sweepstakes with dozens of prizes.

Featuring jaw-dropping graphics and game play that has garnered rave pre-release reviews from the gaming press, "MDK" is the first PC CD-ROM title to be developed by Shiny Entertainment, the developers responsible for the smash hit "Earthworm Jim." "MDK" is scheduled to be released in May, with a Sony PlayStation version available the same month.

"The look and game play found on 'MDK' are astounding," said David Localio, Playmates Interactive's vice president of sales and marketing. "We're anxious to get this game into the hands of experts, enthusiasts and every consumer possible so they can share our anticipation for the release of this truly breakthrough title." Besides getting the first taste of "MDK," anyone who downloads the game from Happy Puppy can enter in the "MDK:

Dying to Win" sweepstakes. Dozens of prizes will be awarded, such as signed, limited edition "MDK" posters and copies of the forthcoming title.

The grand prize is a trip for two to Los Angeles to have lunch with Shiny Entertainment developers and participate in paint-ball war games at Close Encounters. Prizes will be awarded randomly. "We're overjoyed to have the first bite of 'MDK,'" said Don Rainey, president of the Attitude Network, which owns and operates the Happy Puppy site. "We foresee this title as being one of the most popular action games of the year."

The "MDK" demo on Happy Puppy delivers three "arenas" from one of six levels of the first-person action title set in the future, when alien baddies have conspired to turn the Earth into one giant strip mine. The player assumes the identity of Kurt Hectic, whose mission is to return to Earth from a celestial sojourn with the purpose of destroying the leaders of the mobile mining cities.

To effect a successful mission, the crew at Shiny has given Kurt some awesome and creative firepower. Possibly the coolest -- and deadliest -- hardware available to Kurt is a helmet-mounted sniper rifle and vision goggles that can train on an enemy up to two miles away. Some of the additional deadly equalizers players can preview on the demo include "Thumper" (a giant hammer) and the "world's smallest nuclear bomb." Other elements of the final version that can be previewed on the demo include a unique parachute device, multiple camera angle mode and screen shots from other levels.

In addition to the download, a special cheat code for the final version will be available on the Happy Puppy site. Launched in February 1995, Happy Puppy is part of the Attitude Network, an Internet content provider targeting specific areas of interest. Happy Puppy, accessible via <http://happypuppy.com>, operates the busiest gaming site on the Internet and reaches more game enthusiasts than any other site.

Playmates Interactive Entertainment Inc. publishes PC CD-ROM titles and video games for Sony and Sega console systems, including the worldwide hit "Earthworm Jim." It is a subsidiary of Playmates Toys Holdings Ltd., whose stock is listed on the Hong Kong Exchange. The company's Web address is www.playmatestoy.com.

T-HQ Delivers Kick Boxing for Next-generation

ALABASAS, CALIF. (Jan. 29) BUSINESS WIRE --Jan. 29, 1997--T-HQ Inc. (NASDAQ:TOYH) Wednesday announced that it will publish and distribute the fighting simulation game "K-1 The Arena Fighters" for the Sony PlayStation platform, pursuant to an agreement with Japanese game developer XING Entertainment, and is currently in discussion to launch the Sega Saturn version.

T-HQ expects to release the title in March 1997 in North America. "K-1 The Arena Fighters" was formerly released in Japan in 1996 under the name "Fighting Illusion K-1 Grand Prix" and features eight actual fighters from the sport of kick boxing, kung fu and kempo each with their own signature moves and unique fighting style. The 3-D high-impact game offers four modes of play utilizing K-1, the official international tournament fighting organization, rules and techniques.

XING Inc. was established in 1992 as a multimedia company with reported revenues in 1993 of \$60 million and \$240 million in 1994. XING's principal shareholders, both multibillion-dollar Japanese corporations,

consist of Brother Group, Japan, known worldwide for its printers, facsimiles and other electronics; and Intec Inc., Japan, which specializes in music on demand, interactive music and other entertainment software products.

ONLINE WEEKLY STReport OnLine

The wires are a hummin'!

PEOPLE... ARE TALKING

On CompuServe

Compiled by Joe Mirando
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Hidi ho friends and neighbors. I'm sorry I wasn't here last week, but there just wasn't enough information to warrant a column. It's a sign of the times and I'm sure it's only going to get worse as time goes on.

On a happier note, I did get CAB, the Atari ST/TT/Falcon web browser to work here on CompuServe. It entailed using something I swore I'd never have on my computer: MiNT. MiNT, for those of you who don't know, is a multi-tasking-capable system for the ST. The problem is that it doesn't multi-task on its own. You need another 'shell' program to do that. Of course, Atari recommended MultiTOS. I have been a long-time Geneva/NeoDesk user and have always been happy with it. When I learned that you could use MiNT in conjunction with Geneva, I thought that perhaps my web browsing problems were over. You see, at the present time you can only access a PPP connection (which is what CompuServe has) by using MiNT and a specially written overlay file for CAB. I had tried Chimera, the first browser available for the ST and was disgusted with it for several reasons. First, it required a specially formatted hard drive partition which could not be accessed via TOS. Second, it used a shell program that was slow, hard to use, somewhat unstable, and quite a bit less compatible with most of my software than I was ready to accept.

Then along came CAB, Oasis, and a few other web browsers that you could use under regular TOS. The problem was that you could only use a SLIP connection (which CompuServe doesn't offer). It seems that there is something about PPP that is hard to do in TOS but easy (or at least easier) to do in MiNT/MINIX. I resigned myself to having to wait for a miracle to be able to use CompuServe for internet access with my ST.

Then one day, a file got posted here on CompuServe. It was called PPPKIT1.4 and promised that I could use CompuServe for internet access without a huge slowdown or the need for a special partition. The documentation seemed a bit daunting, but I read through it and realized that it wasn't all that hard. My heart was still heavy with the thought of the slowdown I was going to experience because of MiNT though. The major saving grace about this setup is that after MiNT loads, it runs a program that brings back your old TOS version. It's like you never ran MiNT at all! And the best part is that it only slows the system down by about the same amount as using Geneva and NeoDesk does.... a small drop indeed. The only difference from your original TOS is that you now have a drive called "U:". This is a virtual drive that can hold pointers to programs, files, and directories on your hard drive and floppy, as well as

all the 'devices' in your computer (serial ports, printer port, etc.)

This is how the author got around having to use a specially formatted partition for Internet access. I must say that, while not yet perfect, it is quite impressive that the author came up with a system to allow an ST to access the internet in this way. There are still a few problems, but most of them seem to be in CAB, not in the PPP/MiNT/MiNTNET configurations.

If there is any interest, I will write an article on how to make this puppy work and use it either instead of, or in addition to my regular weekly column.

You may have noticed that last weeks non-column listed a new email address for me. For the time being, continue to use 73637.2262@compuserve.com since I'm having a few problems accessing my mailbox at the new site. Write me a quick note telling me if you want to see an article on how to make your ST access the internet from CompuServe and we'll see how much interest there is in it.

Just to give you an idea of what you'd need, I'll tell you that 2 megabytes and a hard drive with at least 5 to ten meg of free space. And of course you'll need a modem. So drop me a line and I'll get to work on it.

Well, let's take a look at what's going on in the Atari Forums...

From the Atari Computing Forums on CompuServe

Eric Hall posts:

"I have been using my parents' IBM with CompuServe for some time now, and I may be moving to Phoenix soon with my ST and without the IBM. Is there a version of CompuServe available for the ST that I could use and get my own membership on? I have a 1040ST upgraded to 4 meg, and two 30 meg hard drives. I don't have a modem for the ST. Is there another forum or source I can access to get information on hooking up my ST to CompuServe?"

Albert Dayes of... STReport (Gosh, I've been waiting a long time to be able to say that) tells Eric:

"You can use a terminal program that supports VT-100 or VT-52. Using an external modem with a serial cable is the only other thing you need. There is no CIM style software for the Atari ST however."

Dennis Larson adds:

"Two terminal programs available are FLASH II and STALKER ST. I think both are good -- I just started using FLASH and it seems to work well. Most any modem will work with the ST, of course the faster the better. Be aware of the serial port limitation of the ST (19200 baud rate). There is a modification kit available (from TOAD?) to increase the speed of the modem port (I think to 56000?). Supposedly it is easy to install with minor soldering (I haven't tried it yet). I wish there was CIM style software for the Atari but apparently not. I think that Genie has something for their service (Alladin?) but I haven't looked into it. Can any body tell me anything about Genie and what they have to offer? Is it any easier to get around?"

Sysop Bob Retelle adds:

"As the others have mentioned, you can use any EXTERNAL modem with your Atari ST, although the maximum port speed with an unmodified ST is 19.2K baud. A standard DB25 Male to DB25 Female modem cable will hook between the modem and the ST's serial port. As for the software, we have some

good choices here in our software libraries, and there are a few commercial telecommunications products still available for your ST.

If you decide to go with a commercial program, you won't have any problems loading it, as the package will come with a floppy disk. Should you decide to try one of the shareware programs in the library here, you can download it into the IBM compatible system you're using now, then transfer it to a floppy disk which can be loaded on your ST, if you remember to follow a couple of simple steps... First of all, format a disk ON THE PC.. and secondly, remember to format it as a low density, 720K disk.

Then just copy the program files onto the floppy and use it in the Atari disk drive. You may find it easier to uncompress the Atari files on the PC first, unless you already have a selection of Atari compression utilities. The standard IBM decompression utilities should work OK with the Atari files. Any .ZIP files will work with PKUNZIP on the IBM, and any .LZH files will work with LHA.EXE on the PC. If you have any problems getting any of this to work, just yell..!"

Janet Clemmerson asks for help:

"I have not been able to read my email on compuserve. Everytime I type go mail. It says I am in the old mail system, but my mailbox has been moved to the new mail system. I have a atari 1040ST and am using Flash II."

I reply to Janet:

"You need to call CompuServe customer service and tell them to switch you to ASCII/VIDTEX. The new HMI services are not available to we lowly Atari users, and that is what you need to access the new mail system. If they say that you cannot be switched, ask if there is a signup option for the old system. If the answer is yes, you may have no option but to cancel your CompuServe account and sign up again. CIS decided not to release the HMI specifications anymore because they will be phasing it out in favor of HTML (the stuff that Web pages are made of) which relieves them of the burden of development and program support. HMI is their own proprietary code and they spend vast amounts of time dealing with the software that the user puts on his or her computer. By going to HTML, they get themselves out from under that weight... all most users will need to do is use the copy of MS Internet Explorer that comes with win95. There are several browsers available for the ST, and some of them even work... though not to access CIS forums yet. Oh, by the way, in a wonderful catch-22, you could normally just send email to customer service and get action that way but... <grin>"

Janet replies:

"Thank you for your help with my email problem. I called customer service and they said to type Go npx32. I did and followed the prompts so I am in the old mail systems. I haven't received mail yet, but when I typed go mail, it didn't say I was in the new mail system. I really appreciate the quick help. I have been going from pillar to post for serveral days and no one has given me any real help before. I am a new online user, so I wasn't sure how to find help."

I tell Janet:

"I'm glad that you got it fixed so easily. It seems to be getting harder and harder to make people understand that we all aren't drawn to "GatesPuters" or to MACs. The next round of troubles is likely to be when CIS changes over to HTML instead of HMI. You know darned well that they'll be using all the latest whiz-bang stuff that Microsoft has to offer in their web-browsing goodie bag, and a lot of it will take us years

(if ever) to catch up with. Well, for now we can be content to use the ASCII interface (It's my format of choice). Feel free to ask any other questions that you have right here! Between the staff and the users, we've got one of the best collections of minds to be found anywhere when it comes to the Atari."

Sysop Jim Ness tells us:

"CompuServe has recently done some mass moving of member mailboxes to the new email system, which supports lots of cute new features (for instance, my email address is "jim_ness", as well as "75300,3155"). Unfortunately, only members who have software capable of "speaking" the HMI protocols can use the new mail system. There is no Atari software with this capability. If you find you cannot access your mailbox because it has been moved, you can simply GO NPX32 to get to a menu that will allow you to switch back to the old system."

Ben at TOC Oz asks:

"Mind if I drop in? There is a new version of OXO Concepts WebMaster Demo. It's Webmaster 1.45 and It's available from INTERNET:oxo@imaginet.fr The Atari version is only available from the French company, not the Swiss address. The demo is available in English, or French. It also has some bug fixes, and now has support for graphics cards. I believe the commercial version is shipping, but I don't have any more details at the moment."

Having gone web browser crazy of late, I reply to Ben:

"I've seen the new demo version of WebSpace (1.45). While it looks pretty good, you cannot actually browse the web with it. The price, I believe, is \$60.00 USD. I'd be a lot more comfortable if I could at least browse the web for five or ten minutes in the demo (then have it cut out because, like, it's only a demo, man <grin>).

I did have major problems getting WebSpace to view existing HTML documents, but that's because both WebSpace and CAB (the browser I used to get the HTML docs in the first place) use their own name-caching system (to avoid problems with files disregarding the 8.3 file name convention). WebSpace simply didn't know where to find the appropriate files. If there is interest, one of us can post the new demo here. Would you like to flip a coin for it? <grin>"

Ben tells me:

"You'd better upload it ... I never have any success at uploading to CIS. I have managed to read .HTM documents from my drives O.K. Though I have no way of collecting new ones at the moment. Webmaster implies that STIK can be used to connect it. (according to the menu choices). I'm going to download the new version of STIK and play around with it. ? U.S. \$60 is about \$78 Aus. bring it up to \$100 Aus with shipping, it could be worth a punt, as I'm certainly wasting more than \$100 worth of time, whenever I take time out to set up one of these .prg's." \

Having strong opinions on this, I tell Ben:

"You mean I won the coin-toss? Yea! I finally won something! <grin>

I'll upload it tonight. It'll be called "WS_145_E.ZIP [By the way folks, I still haven't found the time to upload it] On the PLUS side, you gain more of an understanding of how and why things work by having to fidget with them to get them to work.... Ask half the people who use CIS for internet access what PPP, TCP/IP, or NetMasks are and you'll get a blank stare almost every time (of course, that does depend on which half you ask! <grin>).

When we finally get something like a web browser to work, it's usually because we've had to learn about what it does and why. You just can't do that by popping a cdrom into the drive, hitting "install", and firing it up. But time IS money, and I tend to consider it a price to be paid on the road to techno-enlightenment. <grin>"

Well folks, that's about all we've got room for this week. Don't forget to drop me email to let me know what you think about a how-to article here about using CompuServe to browse the 'Net. By the way, the setup will work not only for CompuServe, but for any provider that requires a PPP connection and doesn't use "cookies" to determine membership. 'Till next time, remember to always listen to what they are saying when...

PEOPLE ARE TALKING

EDITORIAL QUICKIES

Don't Forget Valentine's Day
February 14th 1997

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